



Innovate and Be An Intrapreneur

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It's time to work on you. So sit back and listen to practical, actionable advice to accelerate your progress.

An intrapreneur is an internal entrepreneur — indeed, the word “intrapreneur” comes from combining those two words. While the roles are similar, their objectives differ. An entrepreneur builds a company from the ground up, while an intrapreneur works within an established company to improve it. Intrapreneurs are self-motivated, creative, and action-oriented individuals who seek to innovate structures, services, and products they are already a part of, and it may involve a radical change to the companies that employ them. The role can be a stepping stone to eventual entrepreneurship in some ways.

Intrapreneurs must be problem solvers as their goal is to improve and innovate at their companies. This position isn't great for those of us who prefer to play by the rules, nor is it great for those who aren't ready to commit a single extra thought to their job once they wrap up for the day. Being in an autonomous role requires you to be a self-starter and someone who has a bit of resiliency — not every idea is a good one and being able to pick yourself back up after a failure is critical for an intrapreneur.

You may be thinking it is better to just jump headfirst into the world of entrepreneurship. If you feel you have the networks and that one brilliant idea to strike out on your own, then why not go for it? An intrapreneur position is good. However, those of us who maybe have more than one brilliant idea or prefer to focus on a specific product or structure a role as an intrapreneur may be more suited. You can

focus on your thoughts, and you'll have the resources to develop them. You can also sell yourself and your skills as an innovator. Any good company's leadership knows that competitiveness and innovation are necessary to stay relevant. You will always be in demand as an intrapreneur if you can sell your skills.

A focus on selling is, in fact, one of three key elements the [Harvard Business Review](#) describes as important when making your job more intrapreneurial. A good intrapreneur seeks out dormant ideas or stagnant projects and revives them with that innovative energy. Every company has excellent ideas that have been left on the cutting room floor for one reason or another. Innovation can lie in recognizing what these ideas are and what may have been missing from them to reignite interest in them. It isn't always about fixing a problem directly. Perhaps it was a good idea, but it wasn't being sold the right way. An innovator learns to recognize what makes an idea a good idea and how they can alter a pitch to make that idea an even greater one.

[Take the story of Amazon Prime.](#) Back when they were relatively young, Amazon had their "Super-Saver Shipping" offer, but this was under-utilized, and Amazon was losing out to their competition, eBay. A team led by Greg Greeley formulated an idea based on this stagnating one — why not offer an exclusive membership deal instead? The membership deal would give customers two-day delivery — the same as super-saver shipping — but would be sold to them in a way that felt exclusive and wasn't as obviously contingent on how much the customer purchased. This idea, now known as Amazon Prime, spawned many offshoots for the company and now generates over \$19 billion per year just on subscription fees.

That is a great example of how intrapreneurial innovation doesn't always mean thinking of entirely new ideas. As Greeley and Amazon displayed, knowing how to recycle and spin discarded strategies can be a masterstroke in innovation.

Harvard Business Review describes a second critical element to becoming an intrapreneur: being more proactive. This refers to making opportunities happen for yourself within a company. Many companies are unfamiliar with the idea of intrapreneurship, and some superiors may feel it is a challenge to the status quo. Without a proactive nature, innovation may never happen in these environments. If

your company doesn't have an intrapreneurship system already in place, it could be up to you to set it up. Proactive people are looking to make an impact, which means they will take the initiative and care less about conventions. A proactive person has probably said to you at least once: "it's better to beg forgiveness than to ask permission," and they have a point in some ways. Reaching out to leadership and showing your innovations can sometimes make more of an impact than waiting for an opportunity that will never come.

[Take the story of Richard Montañez](#); now a motivational speaker but formerly the VP of Multicultural Sales & Community Promotions for PepsiCo. Early in his career, Montañez was working as a janitor for FritoLay. When a vending machine broke down, Montañez reportedly took some of the Cheetos snacks home and flavored them with Mexican spices. Montañez had noticed that there were no snacks at the stores in his local Californian town that catered specifically to the large Latino population. So, he packed his new spiced Cheetos in hand-decorated ziplock bags and presented them to CEO Roger Enrico. The rest is a piece of history known as Flamin' Hot Cheetos — a snack that revived the Cheetos brand and a flavor that has lasted on shelves since the 1980s.

Being an intrapreneur is not a solo project, even though it may seem like we are describing one. You will be working within a company's culture, so you also are likely working with a team - perhaps even leading them. All the skills that come with being a good leader also need to be present in a good innovator: empathy, communication, positivity, creative thinking, and giving good feedback. Good ideas cannot be developed without a combination of those critical skills.

It's also important to note that this role is different from a traditional research and development team. Innovation needs broad support, but individuals pursuing an intrapreneur role are specifically looking to work in the gaps that R&D may miss or not even think of in the first place. This is a role for the outliers and rebellious sort, like Ken Kutaragi. He initially pitched a gaming system when he was still a junior employee at Sony, which eventually became the best-selling Sony Playstation. Ken spent his spare time tinkering with a Nintendo system, while Sony had concluded that spending

valuable resources researching a gaming system was not worth their time. Without Ken, the PS5 would never have sold over 18 million units making Sony about \$10.8 billion in revenue.

In some ways, an intrapreneur is taking more responsibility than an entrepreneur by coming up against an already established corporate culture and becoming their own advocate in an environment that may not welcome it. The intrapreneur is sacrificing their time and work projects to develop ideas for which they may or may not even get credit. But in other ways, the role comes with a sense of security as you are using resources from the company at large and can focus on your ideas and how they will impact the company's broader vision.

A plan for innovation is hard to put into words, but have a good think about the examples we described here today. Greg Greeley, Richard Montañez, and Ken Kutaragi each saw a problem. It was out of view to the company at large — Amazon had already created the Super Saver Shipping promotion, Cheetos already had a signature flavor, and Sony didn't want a gaming system. But they noticed a gap, an opportunity to make the product better by remarketing it, catering to a different audience, or opening the company to a new venture entirely.

One way to develop a plan - and your challenge this week - is to conduct a SWOT analysis. A SWOT analysis examines an initiative's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Once you complete a SWOT analysis, make notes on how each element will impact your innovation, both positively and negatively. Note what resources you'll need and how long it might take, and make goals for analyzing success and tracking progress along the way. Take more notes than you think is necessary, start your brainstorming with a SWOT analysis and let it lead you.

Innovation is essential to all teams and feels different than dedicating yourself to a brand new idea. As an intrapreneur, your job is to animate a skeleton of an idea, flesh it out and breathe some life into it!

That's all for today. Thanks for listening.

Reading List

- [Podcast] [The Ideas Show - How an Idea Revolutionised Online Shopping Forever | Amazon Prime](#)
- [Article] [Harvard Business Review - Why You Should Become an Intrapreneur](#)
- [Article] [Disrupt-It-Yourself: Eight Ways to Hack a Better Business Before the Competition Does by Simone Ahuja](#)
- [Video] [Don't Quit Your Job to Change The World - Kapil Kane/Ted Talk](#)
- [Video] [Bundl - 6 Key Insights from 12 Successful Intrapreneurs](#)
- [Article] [What Leaders Can Learn from the Janitor Who Invented Flamin Hot Cheetos](#), Medium.