WHITE PAPER

HUMAN HELIUM

Creating INTRAPRENEURS in the public sector who will help agencies to SOAR!
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Intrapreneurialism: What is it?

Unlike the term entrepreneur, the term intrapreneur is a relatively recent one. In essence, it is the act of behaving like an entrepreneur whilst working within a large organization. In other words, it is the demonstration of business acumen, personal leadership and creative problem-solving abilities that enable employees to find, explore and implement worthy ideas that will help the organisation to be future-ready and relevant. In a fast-moving world, intrapreneurs can be the source of energy and creativity that helps an organisation, especially one steeped in bureaucracy, to find and exploit change and innovation opportunities. Dean of Phoenix University Business School suggests that organisations can benefit from the interpreneurs’ “proactive pursuit of opportunities to shake up the status quo with the goal of improving business systems from the inside out.”

Why Government Needs Intrapreneurs

Value

Government agencies, like all other organisations today, need to transform themselves to rise to the challenges of the 21st century. In order to do this, it is necessary to think differently and do differently. Intrapreneurs can be the driving force behind these changes. They are the most valuable of all employees.

Forbes Magazine reported on research conducted by Brigham Young University’s Entrepreneurship Centre and the Ballard Centre suggesting that beyond 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 BeyondEmployee 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.” This is because interpreneurs are aware of the strategic, bigger picture and act like leaders through cost-reducing and revenue raising initiatives, even if they are not in official leadership positions.

Achieving goals

Bringing an entrepreneurial mind-set to public service, can help government achieve many of its key goals such as cutting red tape, streamlining bureaucratic processes, enhancing procurement, transitioning to digitisation and diversifying delivery models.

Opportunity

In their book *Stretch*[^3] Willyerd and Mistick reveal that up to 67% of Millennials want to work as entrepreneurs at some point in their lives. If government agencies can give young people the opportunity to unleash some of that entrepreneurial vision, then they will attract talented millennials who want to change the world. Millennials are known for turning down well-paid internships or jobs in favor of opportunities that allow them to have a greater impact and contribution.[^4]

Fresh Thinking

But long-term change will require entrepreneurial thinkers to enter and stay in government. Recognizing that an entrepreneurial mindset brings much needed fresh thinking to government policy, *Harvard Business School* has recently introduced a course about public sector entrepreneurship[^5]. Course founder Michael Weiss explained the rationale for the program. “We have many talented people in government, but by and large they have tended to be analysts and strategists, rather than inventors and builders. One reason we didn't have them is we weren't training them. At policy schools, we had not been training people to be all that entrepreneurial, and at business schools, we were not prodding entrepreneurial people to enter the public sector or even just to invent for the public realm.”

Unquestionably here has been a recent commitment on the part of government to encourage entrepreneurialism within the business community. While this is admirable and very necessary for a strong economy, more needs to be done to create intrapreneurs *inside* government as well – at all levels.

Intrapreneuralism: What problems does it solve?

Problem 1 Transforming thinking

Thinking like an entrepreneur is a relatively recent development in the public sector. Consequentially there is now a skills gap when it comes to developing the kind of intrapreneurial thinking that is needed to deliver 21st Century services to the community in innovative ways.

That is not to say the potential does not exist. There are many government employees who are more than capable of developing and demonstrating intrapreneurial thinking and behaviour given some encouragement, training and opportunity.

[^4]: https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/271972
[^5]: http://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/why-entrepreneurs-should-go-work-for-government
Problem 2 Transforming practice

Government departments need to transform traditional practices in order to be relevant in a fast-changing world and serve an increasingly sophisticated citizenry.

Intrapreneurialism is about identifying problems worth solving and then coming up with creative ways of addressing them. Certainly, pockets of highly intrapreneurial practice exist throughout the public sector, driven by future-focussed, visionary, creative problem-solvers. However, pockets of intrapreneurial practice are insufficient for creating the critical mass that will transform an agency.

Problem 3 Inspiring participation

There is a huge amount of underutilised talent in all government departments. These valuable resources are often left to languish, never ‘mined’, refined and developed. It is a massive loss to productivity and creativity within agencies.

If people have worked in a culture where entrepreneurial ideas have been poorly received or never progressed, despite initial acceptance, they lose enthusiasm for further participation. The solution is to encourage, develop and support the intrapreneurs in their efforts.

The skills of the entrepreneur are the skills of the Twenty First Century worker.

Queen Rania of Jordan
Levels of Readiness for Intrapreneuralism

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

The table below shows five common stages people are at in government organisations with their corresponding activity, focus, outcomes and performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>FOCUS</th>
<th>OUTCOMES</th>
<th>PERFORMANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity Finder</td>
<td>Creating</td>
<td>X8</td>
<td>Very High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-solver</td>
<td>Achieving</td>
<td>X4</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioner</td>
<td>Seeking</td>
<td>X2</td>
<td>Above Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule Follower</td>
<td>Maintaining</td>
<td>X1</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seat Warmer</td>
<td>Opposing</td>
<td>X-1</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Model 1: Levels of intrapreneurialism*

To examine the above table, let’s start at the lowest level and work upwards.

**THE SEAT WARMER** is an actively disengaged employee who is not looking to add value to the organisation or their team. They have low levels of motivation (either intrinsic or extrinsic). If opportunities present themselves for this person to implement positive change it won’t be acted on. In fact, the opportunities may even be sabotaged so that other team members can’t act on it either. This person demonstrates low levels of commitment, self-leadership and problem-solving so their performance is below average. They often have a negative impact on a team hence the rating of X-1 in performance. In reality their negative influence may be far greater.
THE RULE FOLLOWER is committed to doing things the way they have always done them. He or she is good at maintaining business-as-usual processes, is very risk averse, fears failure and is unprepared to try anything new – even if it looks like a promising opportunity to add value. Such a person is effective in a static environment but feels out of their depth in an environment that is rapidly changing, evolving and transitioning. Their average performance rating combined with the outcome rating of x1 reflects their skill of maintaining the status quo.

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

THE PROBLEM-SOLVER is someone who jumps at the chance to make things better. If they see an opportunity, they will act on it with due diligence. They are confident in their skills and abilities, have demonstrated that they have good judgment and creative thinking processes. They are astute about how they expend their energy and resources. Their excellent problem-solving skills mean that they are take action and generate positive outcomes for their team, organisation and customers. As such they are sound intrapreneurs in so far as they have the professional, personal and creative skills to effect excellent outcomes on identified problems. The solutions they produce and their openness to collaborate, facilitate the team to high performance. Hence their outcome rating is conservatively placed at X4, in reality it is probably much higher depending on the nature of the problems they solve.
THE OPPORTUNITY FINDER is the true intrapreneur. This person goes beyond being a good problem-solver to being a talented problem-finder. In other words, they are excellent strategic thinkers who can look ahead and identify potential problems before they turn into crises that sap time, energy and resources. These people have found ways of rising above the demands of the urgent to focus on the important. They can help shift teams from reactive to proactive mode. Sometimes they are respected for their skills but unfortunately, they are also occasionally sidelined by less future-focussed team-members or leaders who accuse them of inventing work for already busy people. People who are stuck in a ‘if it ain’t broke don’t fix it’ mentality resist the attempts of Opportunity Finders to pre-emptively bring change.

These Opportunity Finding intrapreneurs are invaluable to any organisation wanting to become future-ready hence their high outcome rating of X8. They are the game-changers, pioneers and drivers, the movers and the shakers who help the team and organisation to create and shape their future. They are high performers who believe in what they are doing and in the important work of their organisation. Consequently, they are constantly vigilant in seeking out opportunities to strengthen the organisation. They see it as their responsibility to be aware of the emerging trends, locally and globally, that are impacting their field and spend time thinking and reflecting on how to ride or navigate them.
Intrapreneurialism within large organisations consists of three fundamental drivers:

1. THE IMPETUS TO CHANGE – **POLEMICS**. This is the challenge to the status quo that leads to disruption.
2. THE STEPS TO CHANGE – **MECHANICS**. The systems, tools and processes that operationalise performance.
3. THE DIFFUSION OF CHANGE – **DYNAMICS**. The interactions, conversations, communications and collaborations that influence others – stakeholders, citizens, other parts of the business or other agencies to ensure that change gets traction.

At the intersection of these drivers lie the key practices.

**Polemics + Mechanics = The Internal ‘Start-Up’**

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

**Mechanics + Dynamics = Scalability.**

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

**Dynamics + Polemics = The Future-Focused Vision**

At the intersection of *Dynamics and Polemics* lies the *future-focused vision* where people can catch a glimpse of a better future where it is possible to address difficult and complex problems in new and exciting ways. This vision emerges because it is articulated, influenced and shaped by visionary, disruptive, entrepreneurial thinkers with their finger on the pulse of the future.

The following section identifies the stages and steps people go through on the journey to becoming confident, creative intrepreneurs who help government organisation to soar.
The 9-Step Process to Creating Inspiring Intrapreneurs Who Will Help Your Organisation to Soar

Visionary people face the same problems everyone else faces; but rather than get paralysed by their problems, visionaries immediately commit themselves to finding a solution. Bill Hybels. Leadership Author.

Intrapreneurialism is a relatively new concept in government departments. So, it helps to have an instructional process as a guide. The table below integrates the concepts from Model 1 and Model 2 to deliver a pathway to intrapreneurialism. At each step the outcomes of both successful and unsuccessful implementation.

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

Model 3: The pathway to intrapreneurialism
**STEP 1 AWARENESS**

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

**STEP 2 INSIGHT**

Insight into what needs to be done to move forward is an essential precursor to change. This comes from the act of questioning current practices and seeking better alternatives. Without this insight, we don’t know what we don’t know, and so are trapped in ridged default structures with no way to rise above them. But WITH insight we can shine a light on things we want to change thereby bringing improvement.

**STEP 3 CHALLENGE**

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

**STEP 4 INITIATION**

The diffusion of new ideas and new ways of doing things that come about as a result of the activities undertaken at the questioning and seeking level will only happen if we initiate action in some way. We need to be able to influence people though compelling communication, deep dialogue and authentic interactions. If we fail to take action in this area and do not initiate interactions and interactions with others, then apathy ensues. Done well, we can be confident of gaining cooperation from others in pursuing intrapreneurial ideas.

**STEP 5 ADAPTATION**

Once problems have been identified for solving, a quick win can be achieved by looking for ways of adapting the context/situation into a more efficient one. Adaptation by its nature is about small to medium size evolutionary modifications and variations rather than transformative, revolutionary outcomes. People often need to build their confidence in smaller ventures before tackling massive ones. If adaptation is done well it brings traction to intrapreneurial initiatives, if not it ends in disappointment.
STEP 6 CHANGE

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

STEP 7 COLLABORATION

One of the most effective levers for transforming teams and organisations and implementing innovation through intrapreneurialism in an embedded way is collaboration. When people with intrapreneurial dispositions can ignite the flame in others then opportunities are amplified. Now there are multiple eyes and minds engaged in the transformation process with the result that teams are much more likely to find opportunities for progress. Done well, this leads to leveraged activity that delivers much more than the sum of the parts. Done poorly it has the potential to disappoint and divide people resulting in disengagement.

STEP 8 EXPERIMENTATION

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

STEP 9 DISRUPTION

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

Conclusion

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

An organisation’s performance is the composite of the skills, vision, commitment, creativity, leadership and intrapreneurialism of its collective workforce. Some people contribute more to it than others. Logically – the more people you have in an organisation who are contributing great ideas, positive energy and committed activity, the better will be the overall performance of the organisation. The more intrapreneurs there are the more successful and future-ready will be the organisation.
I’ve been doing creativity and innovation since *before* they became the new workplace imperatives. My entire working life has been dedicated to the development of human potential. My Doctoral research investigated how people develop expertise in using creativity to find and solve complex problems.

The thing that really lights me up is seeing people liberate their leadership talent to achieve outcomes they didn’t think they could. For example, one leader I worked with recently unleashed her intrapreneurial abilities to develop a collaborative process within her district that resulted in a reclaiming of tens of thousands of dollars in lost productivity.

I think of myself as the catalyst that facilitates that kind outcome - the electricity that provides the juice for the bulb to shine brightly.

What differentiates me is a unique combination of deep academic knowledge, the skills of an educator with the real-world experience of an entrepreneur.

Talk to me if:

- You want your people to be opportunity finders and problem-solvers who create a future ready organisation
- You have leaders or team members whose intrapreneurial talent and potential is currently underutilised
- Your leaders want to behave more like intrapreneurs in order to create value for your organisation and your customers but are not sure how or lack the confidence
- You recognise that intrapreneurialism in government is a new and important capacity that needs developing in your workforce and you want to upskill your people.
- You want your people to embody the five public sector values of the Queensland government to deliver 21st century services even more effectively.

Apart from my *Human Helium* Program to develop interpreneurs, I have a suite of other programs that help leaders, emerging leaders, key influencers and managers to become confident with leading, driving and implementing innovation and creativity with their teams. My purpose is to give you the tools to unleash the potential of your workforce so your organisation can perform at the highest level.
Books

_Leading in the Innovation Age:_ Unleash knowledge talent and experience to create an innovative workplace. Just go to

www.leadingintheinnovationage.com

_Intrapreneur:_ How leaders can Ignite innovation, break bureaucracy and catalyse change. Go to www.intrapreneur.com.au

Next steps

Contact us if you would like more information about our _Intrapreneurialism in Government program._

Also ask about our other customisable programs.

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