

## Intrapreneurial Career Management,

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How's our work world changing? Today, employees are more often expected to take initiative, brainstorm ideas for employers, look after their own development and training. Career management may be 'intrapreneurial', whereby employees think like entrepreneurs while inside a company. Embracing such a ME, Inc. mindset means that you treat your career like a business, the business of ME, Inc. The same creativity and adaptability that mark successful entrepreneurs can move intrapreneurs ahead in our new work world.

### Security

We saw work change dramatically in the '80s and '90s. Security is no longer linked to longevity or loyalty, and may be more linked to competence or flexibility. These are skills that entrepreneurs must hone, and intrapreneurs can borrow tips from them to manage career challenges and competition.

### Your Competitive Edge

Entrepreneurs must cultivate a competitive edge. To stay competitive, they must consistently add value, be client-driven, and promote their distinct benefits.

These buzz word concepts are real for entrepreneurs, as is the key of offering ROI; return on investment. Employers too have the right to expect the same: a good return for their investment in employees, their partners in business. As entrepreneurs must be competitive, so must we all.

Could you compete today for your current position? How are you preparing for the next level, to stay competitive, marketable, employable? Intrapreneurs can strategically plan their careers by modeling entrepreneurial moxy.

### Wish List for Hiring

From my research and conversations with HR professionals, their wish lists for hiring often included flexibility, initiative, and creativity – all traits of entre- or intrapreneurs. As for ROI, employers want increased in efficiency, revenue, savings (cost and time), and customer service.

### Customer Service: Uncommon Courtesy

Entrepreneurs do customer service like nobody's business, because it means their business! Intrapreneurs can follow their lead by excelling at follow-up. Do what you say you will, and do it on time. Timeliness impresses customers, and anyone investing in you is a customer, even your employer.

I've chatted with many entrepreneurs whose clients rave about simple things like prompt call backs, even to say, "I don't have the answer yet, but I'll look into it and call next week". Peers and I call this uncommon courtesy, as it sadly seems promptness and acknowledgment may not be the norm.

Getting to a real person can be equally frustrating amid voice mail mazes. Here's where service is make-or-break front line. Many prefer to get one choice, 'leave a message' instructions if a recipient is unavailable. In more intricate voice systems, tell callers right away how many choices are coming, and include the option to go to an operator. Short message scripts are easier on memory and on long distance. In return, leave short messages, clearly stating your name, number, and need.

Getting to the 'yes man' is another service perk of working with entrepreneurs and, as intrapreneurs, you can join a one-stop renaissance by making your chain of command invisible. Customers (co-workers or end-user clients) don't want to do your leg work, so go through the channels for the right contact or answer yourself, behind the scenes, calling back when you've found it. Ahh, service.

### Respect Resources

Another bugaboo of bosses I've heard is the sense that employees don't value company resources, be they time or money. Intrapreneurs who think like business partners know time is money, and they show respect in the most simple ways, with uncommon courtesies like coming to meetings on time, using supplies frugally, or sending thank you notes for gestures that were appreciated.

Valuing your employer can lead to employers valuing you. Being of value is proof of solid ROI, and it's one intrapreneurial strategy to manage ME, Inc. to be competitive, marketable, and employable your whole career long.

Summarizing leading experts' checklists to assess if you, your organization, or staff is intrapreneurial

Are YOU Intrapreneurial?

referencing Success magazine

Does your desire to make things work better occupy as much of your time as fulfilling your duty to maintain them the way they are? Do you get excited about what you're doing at work? Do you think of business ideas while driving or taking a shower? Can you visualize real action as you consider how to make new ideas work? Do you get in trouble occasionally for doing things that exceed your authority? Are you able to keep your ideas under cover, suppressing your urge to tell all until you have tested them and developed a plan for implementation? Have you successfully pushed through bleak times when something you were working on looked like it might fail? Do you have more than your share of both fans and critics? Do you have a network at work whom you count on for help? Do you get annoyed by others' incompetency in executing your idea? Can you consider trying to overcome a natural perfectionist tendency to do all work yourself and share responsibility for your ideas with a team? Would you be willing to give up some salary in exchange for the chance to try out your business idea if the rewards for the success were adequate?

- Ideas Fit You: believe it, meaningful need filled, like potential customers, experienced, basic success factors match skills, tasks enjoyable, co-workers enjoyable, consuming.
- Ideas Fit Market: real need, priced for good margins, customers believe in it from you, benefit surpasses others meeting need, cost effective delivery of message and product.
- Ideas Fit Company: company really good at the business, fit culture, imagine sponsor, profitable (high margin, low investment), lead to large markets, growth.

Is the Organization Intrapreneurial?

referencing Pinchot + Lawler

Gifford Pinchot, the forefather and author of 'Intrapreneuring', offers this check list to see if your firm is intrapreneurial. Are staff:

- ✓ able to see that unexpected events — successes and failures — mark opportunity?
- ✓ identifiers of opportunity who use creative brainstorming to look at all the possibilities?
- ✓ curious and eager about change — in demographics, lifestyle, technology, markets, regulation, competition?
- ✓ connected, even with 100s of contacts to draw on?
- ✓ aware a "great idea" isn't the same as an opportunity – it must first have a high profit margin to handle the unforeseen and withstand new, low-priced competitors?

Pinchot went on to distinguish criteria to help spot markers of intrapreneurial organizations:

- ✓ Self selection. Does your organization encourage self-appointed intrapreneurs?
- ✓ The doer decides. Are workers allowed to do job their way, or must they always top to explain or ask permission?
- ✓ Tolerance of risk, mistakes. Does your system encourage risk taking and tolerate errors?
- ✓ Patient money. Can the organization stick with idea for years and some false starts?
- ✓ Multiple options. Do you face internal monopolies, or can you use resources of other divisions or outside vendors?

Further intrapreneurial indicators come from 'High Involvement Management', Lawler's take on Anthony's, 'Doing What You Love'.

- ✓ organizational structure – flat, lean, work teams or natural units;
- ✓ job designs – self-managing teams or individual enrichment;
- ✓ information systems – open, decentralized, inclusive, participatively-set goals;
- ✓ careers – multiple tracks, open posting, counseling, selection process realistic, job preview, team involvement;
- ✓ training – extensive, peer trainers;
- ✓ rewards – skill based pay; egalitarian prerequisites, flex benefits, gain sharing;
- ✓ personnel policies – employment stability; participatively determined;
- ✓ physical layout – designed around structure, safe, pleasant, emphasize values symbolically.

