THE RISE OF THE INTRAPRENEUR

Ideas about Sales, Marketing and Connection
THE RISE OF THE INTRAPRENEUR

So that we’re clear on this, let me start with a definition of an Intrapreneur:

**An Intrapreneur is a person who works effectively with others, who takes direct responsibility for the success of a project or initiative; of turning an idea into a profitable outcome through assertion and innovation.**

Let’s consider some of these key elements in turn and how they might possibly apply in your daily role.

**Works effectively with others**

This person works within an organisation. Big or small, it doesn’t matter. Over-resourced or under-resourced – that’s not important. This person is part of a team and works with the team. They actively seek to involve others and leverage the available knowledge base.

**Takes direct responsibility**

Regardless of their title or role, this person proactively takes direct responsibility for the outcome. They don’t wait to be told and they don’t rely on other people. They’re the ones who will put their neck on the line to make sure it happens. They are creating their own map rather than following someone else’s.

**Is success and outcome-orientated**

The outcome of anything will be measured by its success. Therefore this person can define what a successful outcome will look like and be able to answer the question, ‘how do you know you have been successful?’ The type or size of the project or initiative doesn’t matter and isn’t defined by job role or function.

**Ensures a profitable outcome**

One of the aims of the business is to maximise profit, and this person understands the critical role they play in that journey. That means that in the pursuit of any commercial outcome, they are cognisant of the profitability of the initiative, not only with respect to the direct revenue and cost associated with the final outcome but also the cost associated with its pursuit and the relative opportunity costs. After all, they could be somewhere else, doing something else. But they’re not. They’ve made a choice to pursue this particular outcome.

**Assertion**

This person is confident and driven. They are results-orientated and make things happen. Where others may stumble, the Intrapreneur is focused on the outcome and adjusts their activity in order to ensure that it is optimal. Importantly, though, they know when to quit and move on. Understanding that their time bears a cost, they select their opportunities wisely.

**Innovation**

Perhaps the defining feature! Innovation requires creative thinking, exploring new ideas, considering possibilities first, and ensuring divergent and open thinking. In addition to looking ‘outside the box’, the focus is on ‘the edges of the box’, the place that author and entrepreneur Seth Godin defines as being innovative and creative, and where the outcome is also within their sphere of control.

To assess your current level of Intrapreneurship, complete the table below.

For each of the above areas, score yourself on a scale of 1-5, 1 being low and 5 being high.

What is your intrapreneurial score?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACTOR</th>
<th>SCORE (1-5)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Works effectively with others</td>
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<td>Takes direct responsibility</td>
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<td>Innovation</td>
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TOTAL (add the scores above - max. 30)

Percentage (divide by 30 and multiply by 100)

- What does your score tell you about you and your development?
- Which area do you already excel in?
- Which area do you need to develop?
- What is your next step to develop this?

Whatever your score, it’s clear that in the new economy, it’s these traits and behaviours which are likely to aid the successful salesperson.

If the sale is no longer one-dimensional and, to a large extent, requires the salesperson to manage greater complexity and increasing numbers of stakeholders, then the ability to demonstrate and develop each of these areas will be key.

Whilst people may talk about ownership and responsibility, it is bringing each of these areas to life that makes the difference.
SEEKING & CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

The extent to which we’re willing to take on personal responsibility and demonstrate the traits of the intrapreneur is proportional to the outcomes or the results - the ability to make a difference.

Andy Gilbert (9) is the most effective I’ve come across at describing the interaction between personal responsibility, opportunity, and results. At the lowest level of personal responsibility, the chances of someone making a difference are low, if not non-existent. As a result of this, they are likely to deny that an opportunity exists.

You’ve seen the type of person. You tell them about an opportunity with a particular customer or account, and they tell you flat out, ‘no’.

‘No, they’re not interested. They’ve never been interested. They never will be interested’. Nothing happens, as no intrapreneurial traits are demonstrated.

At the next level up, there’s a marginal increase in personal responsibility, where the greatest degree of personal responsibility is demonstrated, the biggest difference is made, and individuals seek out and create opportunities.

They demonstrate those characteristics we previously associated with intrapreneurism - working effectively with others, taking direct responsibility for the success of a project or initiative; turning an idea into a profitable outcome through assertion and innovation - and the results speak for themselves. And this is now the playing field of the modern, successful sales professional.

So when I talk about personal responsibility, ownership, intrapreneurism and developing these areas, what I’m also saying is that it’s those people who proactively seek out greater possibilities who will create increased opportunities and with them, their chances of a successful outcome.

As you consider what it means to be an intrapreneur, to demonstrate a high level of personal responsibility, there are three important elements to consider:

1. An abundant mindset
2. Knowing it’s possible
3. Personal reflection

Adapted from Andy Gilbert, ‘Go MAD - The Art of Making a Difference’ (9)
number one challenge you could solve, and take solace and assurance from the fact that someone, somewhere, has successfully navigated a similar challenge before. Because once you know it’s possible, it completely changes your mindset and perspective and leads you onto the next important question: If I know it’s possible, how can I make it a reality?

3. PERSONAL REFLECTION

As sales professionals, one of our most essential skills is the ability to self-analyse. If we don’t consider how effective we are, then we run the risk of doing the same thing over and over again. No change. No development. If everything we did were successful, then repetition would be fantastic. Yet it seldom is - for the simple reason that our environment constantly changes. We can borrow ideas, but we can’t borrow situations. So if we measure something then we’re saying to others what gets measured gets done. It is important that we ask this question of ourselves first. And it involves asking some reflective questions:

What did I do well?
What could I possibly do differently?
If I were to do that again, what could I possibly do better?
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