

DEVELOPEDGE

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THE **RISE** OF THE **INTRAPRENEUR**

Ideas about Sales, Marketing
and Connection

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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?

FACTOR	SCORE (1-5)
Works effectively with others	
Takes direct responsibility	
Is success and outcome-orientated	
Ensures a profitable outcome	
Assertion	
Innovation	
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.

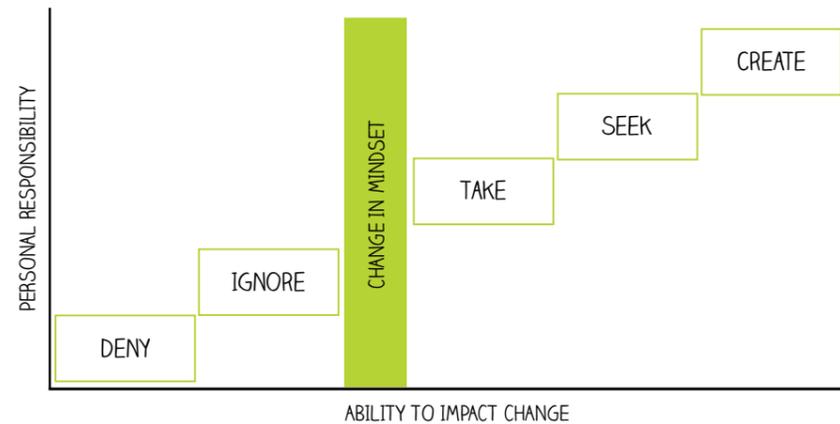
If the sale is no longer one-dimensional and, to a large extent, requires the salesperson to manage greater complexity and increasing numbers of stakeholders, then the ability to demonstrate and develop each of these areas will be key.

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.

Take a look at the illustration below, which plots personal responsibility against the ability to make a difference - and the correlation to our view of 'opportunity'.



Adapted from Andy Gilbert, 'Go MAD - The Art of Making a Difference (9)'

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, but again the likelihood of making a difference is limited. This low level of personal responsibility is associated with a view of **ignoring** opportunities.

That person may say they'll follow up that interested customer. They may go and visit that lead, but when you ask them what's happened a month later, nothing's changed. They've just ignored the opportunity.

At this point, and certainly for most people who stay in and are successful within a sales role, a mindset shift occurs and, at a minimum, they are willing to take opportunities

as they are presented. Although it could still be considered as reactive, when an opportunity arises they **take** it; they do it and deliver.

However it's at the next two levels, the top two levels, 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 intrapreneurialism - **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, intrapreneurialism 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**

1 AN ABUNDANT MINDSET

Imagine two accomplices locked in separate jail cells; each offered three choices by the police. One: if both confess to the charges, both will be jailed for five years. Two: if only one confesses, he will be freed, but the other (the non-confessor) will be jailed for ten years. Three: if neither confesses, both will be tried for minor offences and jailed for only one year each.

If both accomplices know that the other will not treat the police offers as a competition, that there doesn't need to be a winner and a loser, then instead, they can take their collective interest into consideration, and they can both win.

But how often does this happen?

In game and economic theory, a zero-sum game is a mathematical representation of the conditions under which this occurs - that a participant's gain (or loss) is exactly balanced by the losses (or gains) of the other. To put it differently, total gains plus total losses would have to equal zero. Or another way, for me to gain the sale, you have to lose the sale.

If I assess every situation, opportunity, project, sale, or initiative as a zero-sum game, then I'm making the assumption that in order for me to win, then you have to lose. Conversely, I'm assuming that in order for you to win, I have to lose.

Contrary to this theory, the idea of non-zero-sum describes a scenario where the participants' aggregate gains and losses equal more than zero. And in this situation, one person's loss (or gain) doesn't equal another's gain (or loss).

In other words, we can both win.

This is an abundant mindset.

The problem we have is that, for the most part, we assume that our world, and particularly our business world, operates under zero-sum conditions. And to some extent, that's the way we've been taught and conditioned to think that business and selling works.

Right, I'm going to do that before you do. Otherwise I may lose!

If on the other hand, we strive to work under the conditions of a non-zero sum game, then the actions that we take will vary dramatically. If I'm not assuming that for you to win, I lose - and vice versa - then I'm likely to operate in a very different manner. My thinking will be different and, as a result, the things I do will be very different.

And it's these actions that sit at the heart of the idea of abundance and a 'win-win' mentality, versus the idea of scarcity. The notion that there isn't enough opportunity out there for you, me, and everyone else is only true if I'm operating under zero-sum conditions.

The challenge with abundance and a non-zero-sum game is that there is no universally accepted solution. There is no single optimal strategy that is preferable to all, and no predictable outcome. In some instances, we'll have mutually aligned objectives and in others, they'll be contrasting.

But the salesperson who assumes a higher level of personal responsibility, who strives for abundance and win-win scenarios, is able to live out the behaviours associated with the concept of a non-zero-sum game in pursuit of mutual and shared success.

2 KNOWING IT'S POSSIBLE

Of course, it may seem impossible, and often it feels like it is, especially in our new and complex selling environment:

- **Converting that competitive account...**
- **Changing the practice of that one, difficult, prospective customer...**
- **Turning around the fortunes of a failing business or territory...**
- **Setting up a new business or territory in a competitive environment, or**
- **Managing a difficult relationship**

In the moment, all of these challenges - and many more - can seem impossible and can lead you to think that, actually, it's probably better to give up and look elsewhere for something easier.

However, there are some important questions to ask:

- **Has anyone ever converted a competitive account before?**
- **Has someone ever changed the practice of a difficult customer before?**
- **Has anyone ever turned around a failing business or territory before?**
- **Has someone ever established a new business or territory in a competitive environment before?**
- **Has anyone ever successfully managed a difficult relationship?**

The answer, of course, to all of these is, 'yes'.

But the fact that the answer is 'yes' is actually more important than a first glance may suggest.

In knowing that something difficult has been done before, in knowing that a challenge or obstacle has been overcome, and in knowing that people - and many of them - have prevailed in difficult circumstances, you know that it is possible.

As you look at your business, give some thought to the

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 it's only through the application of ideas that we have the opportunity to learn.

Our ability to evaluate how well we achieved a task, or whether we achieved it at all, is a key factor for success.

Self-analysis separates the mediocre sales professional from the great one. Self-reflection is key.

A major indicator of a high level of emotional intelligence is your ability to reflect on your performance, and to analyse how well you did.

- **What gets measured gets done**
- **Inspect what you expect**

So if we measure something then we're saying to others and ourselves: **'this is important'**.

Sales managers are an excellent resource – they can provide you with insightful comments about how well you performed in front of the customer. And a good sales manager will act like a mirror, allowing you to reflect on what, and how, you performed in each of your sales interactions. A good sales manager is a coach, through whom we become better salespeople.

Unfortunately, though, our sales manager can't travel with us all the time. So how can we continue to hold up that mirror when travelling alone? There are three simple steps to becoming an ever-evolving sales professional, one who adapts to the changing environment, capable of overcoming new challenges as they arise.

And it involves asking some reflective questions:

What did I do well in that call?

It is important that we ask this question of ourselves first.

Humans have a tendency to focus on the negative.

We punish ourselves for the things we did wrong.

In his book *The Inner Game Of Tennis* (10), Timothy Gallwey talks of how, after making a mistake, we mentally ask ourselves:

- **'Why did I do that?'**
- **'I always do that'**
- **'I'm no good at that'**

And it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The 'self-talk' we give ourselves determines the mental attitude we carry with us.

So focusing on the 'helpful and constructive' maintains the mental attitude and worldview required of successful sales professionals.

By asking 'what did I do well?'; we frame our mindset as positive. And we should follow up 'from the things I did well, what will I carry forward and do again in future calls?'

The phrasing of the next reflective question is important.

And it is not 'what did I do badly?'

If I were to do that again, what could I possibly do differently?

Notice the subtleties of the change in language. Asking oneself about doing something differently and doing something badly have very different effects on our psyches, our mindset, and our next steps.

Acknowledging what 'could possibly be done' allows the mind to open up and explore options; to build on what went well and identify where opportunities lie.

It is creative and experiential and allows you to picture the future.

The final stage in the self-reflection process is to ask:

What do I commit to do again which will help me in the future?

Now the next part is important. Really important.

Write down, in ink, the answers to your questions.

In writing the answers down, you will make a tangible commitment to yourself.

Some people I've worked with even send these to themselves as an email, SMS, or postcard with a delayed delivery date or mail them to a trusted colleague.

Holding yourself accountable to achieving this, significantly increases the chances of you doing it.

The difference between winning and losing is not much.

In all competitions – sporting events or in business – it is those who take time to ask themselves the question 'how can I do this even better next time?' who are the ones who develop a personal 'winning culture'.

In order to analyse, we must record our successes as well as the things we need to improve. We must consciously repeat the activities that bring us success and identify when activities do not work – and have the confidence to experiment with ideas and approaches until they do work.

YOUR OWN HIGH-PERFORMANCE CULTURE

A culture is a result of the constituent parts – the people – that combine to form an organisation. Companies spend millions on trying to develop, create, change, and reinforce cultures, but the fundamental truth is that you can't change an organisation's culture, you can only work to develop the individual cultures. It is the sum of the parts that is greater than the whole.

People talk about 'a high-performance culture', but that is a direct result of the degree to which individuals accept personal responsibility and own their business. Leaders can take steps to increase ownership through autonomy, mastery, progression, and purpose, but ultimately it's down to the individual. It's down to you.

In our modern selling environment, we all need to be project managers, managing multiple projects at any one time. Regardless of the size of company or team,

that requirement is a constant. We need to set goals, establish teams, involve others, set timelines, establish accountability, and measure outcomes. But those things require the mindset of an owner.

This idea of ownership is critical because, without it, all the tools and techniques in the world aren't going to have the same impact as they otherwise could.

The rise of the intrapreneur means that there is a window of opportunity for the sales person who can seek out and create opportunities; who thinks abundantly, thinks in terms of possibilities, and who is willing to do the (often difficult) emotional work of personal reflection. At a time when the single biggest point of differentiation is the salesperson, the intrapreneur has the opportunity to be that difference.

KEY MESSAGES

- **Inextricably linked to success in the modern selling environment is having the mindset of an owner – the mindset 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; for turning an idea into a profitable outcome through assertion and innovation**
- **When we consider the link between personal responsibility and results, we must acknowledge that there are five levels which exist – deny, ignore, take, seek, and create**
- **There are three essential factors that contribute to the mindset of an owner:**
 1. An abundant mindset
 2. Knowing it's possible
 3. Personal reflection
- **Embracing these factors and this mindset leads to the development of a high-performance culture**

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