



The CERA Project Presents:

**EMPOWERING
INTRAPRENEURSHIP: A
PATHWAY TO
ORGANIZATIONAL
SUSTAINABILITY AND
INNOVATION**

Leaders International



This paper comes as part of a series of whitepaper conducted under the Corporate Entrepreneurship Responsibility Alliance (CERA) project, that are meant to raise awareness and spread knowledge on related topics under the project's mandate. The CERA project is funded by the Embassy of Netherlands to Jordan and implemented by Leaders International. The project addresses the national imperative of promoting a transition in the enterprise ecosystem that would contribute to realizing the growth potential of SMEs. It is focused on tackling one of the key constraints that face Jordanian enterprises, namely the availability and quality of local supply chains. The project will rely on supply chain requirements and internal procurement needs of larger enterprises and will build on the concept of Corporate Entrepreneurship Responsibility as an entry point to create an alliance committed to supporting the growth of the local industry in underserved regions of Jordan.

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In today's rapidly changing business landscape, innovation and adaptability have become essential for organizations striving to maintain a competitive edge. As companies face increasing pressures to remain relevant, the concept of intrapreneurship has gained traction as a strategic approach to fostering innovation from within. Intrapreneurs, who act as visionaries and change agents, occupy a unique position within their organizations, driving projects that can lead to significant growth and transformation. Despite its potential benefits, intrapreneurship remains underrepresented, with fewer than 5 percent of employees typically exhibiting these entrepreneurial traits. This paper will explore the relationship between intrapreneurship and business sustainability, emphasizing its role in enabling organizations to adapt to environmental changes and enhance performance, while highlighting the importance of cultivating a culture that encourages intrapreneurial thinking among all employees.

Defining Intrapreneurship

Intrapreneurship is a multifaceted concept that has gained significant attention in the literature, reflecting its importance in fostering innovation and growth within established organizations. While there is no universally accepted definition, intrapreneurship generally refers to the process by which individuals or teams within an organization act like entrepreneurs to drive innovation and create new business opportunities. The process of intrapreneurship is characterized by its emphasis on innovation.¹ Intrapreneurship is synonymous with the initiation and implementation of innovative ideas that can lead to new products, services, technologies, and strategies.² It represents a dynamic interplay of creativity and proactivity within an organization, enabling employees to take ownership of their projects and pursue new ventures aligned with the organization's goals.³ The concept of intrapreneurship is particularly relevant in transitional economies, where the adaptation to global standards presents both challenges and opportunities for growth. In such contexts, intrapreneurship can drive profitability and sustainability, even in organizations that do not primarily focus on rapid expansion.⁴

¹ Carrier 1996

² Antoncic and Hisrich 2001

³ Neessen et al., 2019

⁴ Antoncic and Hisrich 2001

Two predominant trends emerge in the research surrounding intrapreneurship. The first trend emphasizes the characteristics of the individuals who implement innovations. Scholars in this area categorize intrapreneurs based on certain psychological traits and personal attributes, suggesting that these qualities enable employees to recognize opportunities for change and pursue innovative solutions within their organizations.⁵ The second trend shifts the focus from the individual to the organizational framework. In this view, intrapreneurship is seen as a managerial strategy and an organizational model that encourages entrepreneurial behavior among employees.⁶ This approach highlights the significance of internal structures, communication channels, and management support in facilitating an environment conducive to innovation.⁷ Organizations that prioritize open communication, provide formal controls, and engage in environmental scanning are more likely to experience the benefits of intrapreneurship.⁸

Importantly, the distinction between corporate entrepreneurship (CE) and intrapreneurship is worth noting. While CE often refers to top-down entrepreneurial activities initiated by management, intrapreneurship implies a bottom-up approach, where employees take the initiative to explore and exploit business opportunities.⁹ Overall, intrapreneurship embodies a productive endeavor that can significantly enhance an organization's competitive edge by fostering an environment where innovative thinking and entrepreneurial actions thrive. By recognizing the value of intrapreneurs, organizations can harness the creative potential of their employees and ultimately achieve sustained growth and innovation.

Key Aspects of Intrapreneurship

At its core, intrapreneurship is characterized by a multidimensional structure that includes four key dimensions: new business venturing, innovativeness, self-renewal, and proactiveness.¹⁰

⁵ Carrier 1996

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ Antoncic and Hisrich 2001

⁸ *ibid*

⁹ Rigtering and Weitzel, 2013

¹⁰ Antoncic and Hisrich 2001

The first dimension, new business venturing, is essential as it focuses on the pursuit of new opportunities that align with the firm's existing products or markets. This aspect can lead to the creation of entirely new business units within the organization, redefining the company's offerings and potentially tapping into new markets.

Innovativeness is the second dimension and refers to the development of new products, services, and technologies that can enhance the company's competitiveness. This creative process is vital for organizations wishing to maintain relevance and adapt to changing market demands. While, the self-renewal dimension emphasizes the need for organizations to reformulate strategies, reorganize, and implement organizational change. This adaptability is crucial for maintaining a competitive edge and ensuring long-term sustainability in a dynamic business environment.

Finally, the proactiveness dimension embodies a top management orientation toward enhancing competitiveness. It involves taking initiative, embracing risk-taking, and demonstrating competitive aggressiveness. This mindset encourages organizations to stay ahead of market trends and act decisively in pursuing growth opportunities. In summary, intrapreneurship encompasses a blend of internal attributes—such as risk-taking and innovation—as well as external environmental factors. These elements work together to drive corporate performance and foster a culture that encourages continuous improvement and agility. By leveraging intrapreneurship, organizations can thrive in an ever-evolving marketplace.

The difference between Intrapreneurship and Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship are two distinct yet interrelated concepts that play crucial roles in driving innovation and economic growth. Entrepreneurship refers to the process of creating and developing a new business or venture, often characterized by individuals who take significant risks to bring their ideas to market. Entrepreneurs operate independently, seeking to innovate based on their vision and goals.¹¹ They innovate for themselves, pursuing personal ambition and financial gains while navigating the challenges of establishing and sustaining a new

¹¹ Carrier 1996

business. Their efforts often lead to the introduction of new products, services, or business models that can reshape industries.

On the other hand, intrapreneurship occurs within established organizations. Intrapreneurs leverage their entrepreneurial skills to innovate on behalf of their employers, driving change and growth from within.¹² Unlike entrepreneurs, intrapreneurs have the advantage of existing resources, support, and infrastructure. However, they also face limitations imposed by the organization's structure and culture. Intrapreneurs work to maximize individual utility, which may sometimes lead to conflicts with the broader objectives of their organizations, such as profit maximization or social welfare.¹³

Additionally, intrapreneurial ventures typically exhibit a higher success rate, with estimates indicating up to 80% success for intrapreneurs compared to about 20% for traditional startups.¹⁴ Employees' views on personal income, ownership, and autonomy at work are linked to their entrepreneurial aspirations, while their willingness to take risks is more closely associated with intrapreneurial intentions.¹⁵

Both entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship significantly contribute to innovation, though they do so in different contexts and with varying motivations. While entrepreneurs seek to create value for themselves and their stakeholders, intrapreneurs focus on harnessing their innovative ideas to benefit the organization they belong to. Ultimately, both roles are essential for fostering a creative environment that encourages continuous improvement and adaptation in a rapidly changing marketplace.¹⁶

¹² *ibid*

¹³ Elert and Stenkula 2020

¹⁴ Shah et al. 2014

¹⁵ Huang et al. 2021

¹⁶ Carrier 1996

Factors Affecting Intrapreneurship

Intrapreneurship is influenced by a variety of factors that can enhance or hinder its development. Several organizational characteristics play a crucial role in shaping intrapreneurial efforts. For instance, organizational age and size often have a negative relationship with intrapreneurship.¹⁷ Larger and older organizations tend to be more hierarchical and bureaucratic, which can stifle innovation and impede growth. As these organizations evolve, there is often a recognized need for a shift towards intrapreneurship or the infusion of entrepreneurial thinking to remain competitive.

The level of economic development within a region also impacts intrapreneurship. A robust economic environment tends to favor larger firms, which may inadvertently reduce the rates of independent entrepreneurship. These dynamic highlights the intricate relationship between various organizational levels and the broader economy.

On specific level, individual traits of employees also play a significant role in fostering intrapreneurship.¹⁸ According to the Big Five personality traits, characteristics such as conscientiousness, low agreeableness, and emotional stability have been positively linked to intrapreneurial behavior.¹⁹ Employees who exhibit these traits are more likely to engage in proactive problem-solving and innovative thinking, aligning with an organization's commitment to innovation.

Encourage Intrapreneurship Engagement through Initiatives:

1. Provide managerial support to facilitate innovation.
2. Develop, monitor, and implement new business ideas.
3. Allocate time for brainstorming sessions and workshops.
4. Design a flexible work system that allows for discretion in how work is done.
5. Implement reward systems to motivate and recognize employees' intrapreneurial efforts.

Huang et al. 2021

¹⁷ Antoncic and Hisrich 2001

¹⁸ Mahmoud et al. 2020

¹⁹ ibid

Whilst, within a broader context, the overall strategy and industry context of an organization can determine how receptive it is to intrapreneurial initiatives. Companies that embrace a decentralized structure and employ less formal management control typically see a higher prevalence of productive intrapreneurs. This environment encourages a blend of established routines for innovation along with robust support from top management, further enhancing intrapreneurial activities.²⁰ The approach a company takes towards innovation encompasses three crucial components: product innovation, proactiveness, and risk-taking. In addition, strategic renewal of existing operations is vital for promoting a culture of innovation. Such renewal may involve adopting new organizational structures that facilitate creative thought and problem-solving, ultimately enhancing the company's capability to adapt in a dynamic marketplace.

The role of top management is also pivotal in fostering an intrapreneurial culture. A supportive atmosphere encouraging experimentation and innovation can significantly enhance intrapreneurial efforts. Conversely, the indifference or resistance from influential members within the organization towards new ideas can stifle innovation and prevent the realization of intrapreneurial initiatives. In some cases, the drive for intrapreneurship may emerge from a fundamental need for survival, prompting organizations to seek innovative solutions to combat challenges.²¹

Therefore, one can consider that several interconnected factors, from organizational structure and individual employee traits to management support and economic conditions, influence intrapreneurship's effectiveness within organizations. Addressing these elements can help cultivate a thriving atmosphere for innovation and sustained growth.

²⁰ Hornsby et al. 2002

²¹ Seshadr and Tripathy 2006

Negative firm behaviour that encourages Intrapreneurship

First, "unfavorability of change" refers to a perception that the external environment is not aligned with a company's goals and mission. When companies feel that changes in the market or industry are working against them, it can motivate employees to adopt entrepreneurial behaviors in order to better adapt and innovate.

Second, "competitive rivalry" highlights intense competition within the market. When companies face significant competitive pressures, it can drive them to pursue intrapreneurial initiatives as a way to differentiate themselves, improve their offerings, and find new opportunities for growth.

Both of these unfavorable conditions—perceived obstacles due to change and intense competition—can actually stimulate corporate entrepreneurial efforts, pushing companies to seek creative solutions and new strategies.

Zahra 1993

Reasons to Pursue Intrapreneurship

There are several compelling reasons for individuals and organizations to pursue intrapreneurship. First and foremost, intrapreneurship enables companies to penetrate new markets or enhance their competitive edge.²² By fostering an environment where employees are encouraged to think creatively and take initiative, organizations can innovate and adapt, ultimately leading to increased revenue streams and market presence.

Intrapreneurship promotes overall flexibility within a company. By empowering employees to take ownership of projects and explore new ideas, organizations can respond more swiftly to changing market conditions and consumer needs. This adaptability not only improves productivity but also ensures higher quality outcomes, as teams are motivated to optimize their processes and deliver exceptional results. Furthermore, the support of management is vital in cultivating an intrapreneurial culture. Open-minded leaders who recognize the benefits of fostering intrapreneurship are more inclined to encourage their teams to experiment and innovate.²³ This culture not only enhances productivity and organizational adaptability but also creates an environment where employees feel valued and empowered to contribute meaningfully.

²² Carrier 1996

²³ *ibid*

At the personal level, the motivation to engage in intrapreneurship varies greatly among individuals. Factors such as personal temperament, past experiences, and career objectives play a crucial role in driving an individual's desire to become an intrapreneur. Many intrapreneurs are intrinsically motivated by a passion for learning, a desire for personal growth, and the aspiration to eventually transition into entrepreneurship.²⁴ This intrinsic motivation often leads to greater job satisfaction and employee retention, as individuals feel a deeper connection to their work and its impact. By fostering a culture of innovation and providing intrinsic motivation, organizations can unleash the potential of their employees, leading to sustained success and performance improvement.

Mechanisms to Implement Intrapreneurship

Intrapreneurship can shape the methods, constraints, and opportunities that firms encounter. One key mechanism fostering intrapreneurship is the innovation that enhances a firm's competitive strength. A simple organizational structure facilitates the exchange of ideas and enhances interpersonal contact between owner-managers and employees.²⁵ This structure enables intrapreneurs to champion their ideas without navigating complex hierarchical channels, allowing for easier recognition of their contributions.

The process of intrapreneurship is significantly influenced by the management styles of leaders who prioritize delegation, exhibit trust in their employees, and accept failure as a part of the innovation process. This support empowers intrapreneurs to explore and implement new initiatives enthusiastically. Moreover, intrapreneurs express the necessity for ample space to exercise their rights and pursue promotions that would allow them to expand their projects.²⁶

Establish essential mechanisms to support intrapreneurship:

1. Create robust information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructures.
2. Foster strong relationships between the organization and employees (Organization-Employee Relationship - OER).
3. Promote collaboration among employees (Employee-Employee Relationship - EER).

Huang et al. 2021

²⁴ ibid

²⁵ ibid

²⁶ ibid

Interestingly, intrapreneurship can emerge both organically and as a deliberate strategy, depending on the context.²⁷ It may result from proactive strategies implemented by owner-managers, triggered by reflections on intrapreneurial behaviors, which can then be developed incrementally. Research indicates that the structural and relational aspects within an organization are critical for cultivating an intrapreneurial environment. The adaptable structures of small businesses tend to encourage a culture of collaboration and alignment.²⁸

Understanding the Impact of Intrapreneurship on Performance

Understanding the impact of intrapreneurship is essential for organizations seeking to enhance their growth and profitability. Research suggests that companies that foster intrapreneurial activities can achieve significantly higher levels of performance compared to those that do not engage in such practices.

The relationship between intrapreneurship and organizational performance is influenced by various strategic and environmental factors.²⁹ Organizations that actively encourage intrapreneurship are better equipped to adapt to external changes and innovate internally, which are critical elements in today's dynamic business landscape.³⁰ By empowering employees through involvement, job autonomy, and a supportive reward system, companies can tap into a wealth of innovative ideas and drive meaningful change.³¹

Intrapreneurship manifests in multiple ways, including the introduction of new products, the development of novel production methods, market expansion, sourcing new supply channels, and the implementation of restructured organizational frameworks.³² These activities not only foster strategic renewal and enhance competitive advantage but also contribute to the long-term sustainable growth of the organization.

²⁷ Mintzberg 1978

²⁸ Carrier 1996

²⁹ Antoncic and Hisrich 2001

³⁰ Augusto Felício et al., 2012

³¹ Adeyeye et al., 2015

³² Elert and Stenkula 2020

Is Intrapreneurship Always Productive?

Intrapreneurship is not always productive. While there is a prevailing assumption that intrapreneurship has positive effects on society, intrapreneurial activities can vary in their outcomes. Some intrapreneurship efforts may be productive, contributing positively to both the firm and society, while others can be unproductive or even destructive, ultimately leading to a reduction in social income and wealth. The outcomes depend on how societal institutions and firm rules interact, influencing whether entrepreneurial activities are directed towards beneficial market pursuits or less productive, potentially harmful activities like lobbying or lawsuits. Thus, the nature of intrapreneurship can result in a spectrum of impacts rather than guaranteeing positive contributions.

North, 1990

Elert and Stenkula 2020

Intrapreneurship in Small Businesses

Intrapreneurship plays a crucial role in small businesses, acting as a powerful catalyst for innovation and growth. While much of the existing research has focused on larger organizations, the dynamics of intrapreneurship in smaller firms reveal significant potential for fostering creativity and competitiveness. Small businesses can serve as ideal incubators for intrapreneurs, as they typically provide a supportive environment that encourages innovative thinking. The inherent structural simplicity and fewer hierarchical levels in these firms allow for a more direct connection between intrapreneurs and owner-managers, making promotions and actionable ideas more tangible.³³ This proximity to decision-makers not only gives intrapreneurs a chance to shine but also aligns their innovative projects with the strategic goals of the business, potentially reinforcing the firm's competitive edge.

The entrepreneurial spirit of small business owners who adopt growth-focused strategies creates a fertile ground for intrapreneurship to thrive. By empowering employees with the resources and independence to pursue innovative initiatives, small firms can harness the creative energy of their workforce effectively.³⁴ Intrapreneurs, therefore, become invaluable allies for

³³ Carrier 1996

³⁴ *ibid*

owner-managers, driving well-defined innovations that contribute significantly to the firm's success. Therefore, intrapreneurship in small businesses not only fosters a culture of innovation but also strengthens the overall competitive power of these firms, ensuring their contribution to economic growth and stability.

Possible constraints to intrapreneurship

Focus on Current Performance:³⁵ Defender owners and managers primarily seek innovations that improve performance within existing markets and products, which can limit the scope and freedom for more radical or disruptive intrapreneurial initiatives.

Lack of Recognition and Rewards:³⁶ Many intrapreneurs feel dissatisfied due to the absence of recognition and rewards for their contributions. Without incentives, there is little motivation to pursue new projects.

Negative Perception:³⁷ Intrapreneurs are sometimes seen as threats to the status quo, as they challenge established paradigms. This perception can lead to resistance from management, hindering their ability to innovate effectively.

Lack of Supportive Infrastructure:³⁸ Despite the stated desire for employee ideas, firms often lack the proper tools and processes to effectively harness and develop these ideas into practical projects and products, limiting the implementation of innovative concepts.

These constraints can create a challenging environment for intrapreneurs within organizations, impacting their ability to drive innovation.

³⁵ ibid

³⁶ ibid

³⁷ Elert and Stenkula 2020

³⁸ Huang et al. 2021

Intrapreneurship in the Global South

Intrapreneurship in the Global South tends to be less prevalent compared to regions like the Nordic countries, where it is more common.³⁹ The phenomenon faces several challenges due to economic conditions, lower levels of employee autonomy, and the structure of firms in these areas. Research indicates that developing countries exhibit significantly lower rates of intrapreneurship.

In developing economies, there is a lack of sufficient studies exploring the dynamics of learning organizations and intrapreneurship, which suggests that the concept is not fully understood or utilized.⁴⁰ The economic environment in these countries may also influence the opportunity cost of independent entrepreneurship, making intrapreneurship a less attractive or feasible option for employees.⁴¹ Consequently, large organizations in these regions may not foster an entrepreneurial mindset among their workers in the same way that firms in higher-income countries do.

The case of Jordan

Intrapreneurship in Jordan, particularly within Telecom and pharmaceutical companies is emerging as an essential concept aimed at enhancing organizational performance and adapting to changing environments. It involves fostering entrepreneurial behaviors within employees to drive innovation and improve various aspects of the business, such as production volume, sales, and overall performance. These organizations have recognized the importance of training and awareness sessions for all employees to ensure a unified understanding of intrapreneurship.⁴² This collective approach to education underscores the belief that promoting entrepreneurial practices can lead to significant behavioral changes and stimulate intrapreneurial activities among staff.⁴³

³⁹ Elert et al., 2019

⁴⁰ Ashal et al., 2023

⁴¹ Lucas, 1978

⁴² Toubasiand Al-Haddad 2022

⁴³ Ashal et al., 2023

Given the challenging circumstances and frequent crises in the Jordanian environment, the findings of research conducted in this area highlight how organizational learning can positively impact intrapreneurship. This is particularly beneficial for workers and practitioners, providing insights into how to leverage learning to enhance intrapreneurial initiatives within these sectors.⁴⁴ Ultimately, intrapreneurship is viewed as a strategic approach for organizations in Jordan to innovate, revitalize their operations, and better navigate the complexities of their external and internal environments.

Intrapreneur Policies

Intrapreneurship policies should consider an additional layer of firm rules that interact with institutional frameworks. These policies must ensure that firm rules encourage constructive behaviors rather than destructive ones, as this will impact the effective allocation of intrapreneurial talent. When designing public policy, it's essential to integrate both sets of rules to foster a supportive environment for intrapreneurship, which is valuable for innovation in modern economies. Otherwise, efforts to improve societal institutions may not yield effective results.

Elert and Stenkula 2020

⁴⁴ ibid

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