



INTRAPRENEURSHIP

*HOW TO EMPOWER YOUR EMPLOYEES
TO INNOVATE*



INTRODUCTION

Intrapreneurs are the drivers of innovation within a company and essential for its success.

Learn what it takes to unleash your intrapreneurship power: from major building blocks to setup an intrapreneurship program, an overview of the market's main intrapreneurship models to key success factors.

www.whataventure.com



WhatAVenture is a worldwide operating innovation consultancy. It has expertise in guiding new business ideas to success. The focus of our work is the combination of corporate power with startup agility. Our proved methods enable intrapreneurs to quickly validate and implement their business ideas. WhatAVenture serves both as a sparring partner for CEOs and innovation managers in creating an innovation culture, as well as an external team for the execution of new business ideas. Our client base ranges from energy suppliers, banks, transportation and IT companies, to aid organizations and international universities.

About the authors



Mag. Patricia Schandlbauer, MSc.

Patricia is responsible for coordinating and managing our customer's projects. Alongside scouting of startups and experts and realizing workshops, she focuses on continuously developing our methods further. Loving to explore and understand complex topics and work with stakeholders, she has gained comprehensive international research experience within various areas, including international business, entrepreneurship and innovation.



Dr. Stefan Perkmann Berger

Stefan has a strong research background in the field of open innovation and has been running many initiatives in the startup scene. He is well-informed in both the corporate and startup worlds in order to bring ideas to success. Stefan strongly believes in the positive synergies between startups and established companies and loves to support technologies that make the world a better place.

UNLEASH YOUR INTRAPRENEURSHIP POWER

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS WHITEPAPER

- | The relevance of intrapreneurship
- | What makes intrapreneurs special
- | Overview of the major building blocks to set up an intrapreneurship program
- | Outline of major intrapreneurship models and their specialties
- | Major success factors while running intrapreneurship programs

STARTUPS - HYPE OR FOR REAL?

Machine-to-machine communication, 3D printing, robotics, drones, virtual and augmented reality, blockchain and cryptocurrencies – the list of innovations changing everyday life seems endless. All around the world, markets are becoming increasingly dynamic, driving 88 percent of the companies that were listed in Fortune 500 in 1955 out of the market¹.

Today, on the contrary, international media headlines attract our attention toward outstanding startup success stories, such as Tesla, Airbnb, Spotify, etc.. As a response to these exceptional achievements, many large companies started to launch startup programs to systematically profit from their innovation power. Collaborating with startups has proven to provide significant benefits such as identifying and attracting talents, testing and learning about new technologies, having leaner and faster innovation cycles, entering new markets, and making better use of one's assets – just to name a few (learn more in our whitepaper "[5 steps to successfully collaborate with startups](#)"). All of this leads us to the following question:

If innovation can be outsourced to startups, why even bother about intrapreneurship? And what is its role?

This reasoning might sound appealing knowing about the difficulties to drive innovation from within. However, from building up many startup as well as intrapreneurship programs, we are convinced of the opposite: it is impossible to achieve significant innovation results without an organization's internal support of intrapreneurs. This also holds true for companies running startup initiatives. In fact, to truly profit from startup programs requires the support of internal innovation champions – the intrapreneurs.



DEFINITION

Intrapreneur

Historically, the term "intrapreneurship" refers to an individualistic perspective where it is the individual employees who are in focus as opposed to the organization or the top-level decision makers. Most of the time, intrapreneurs do not fit into a specific profile as the "typical" intrapreneur does not exist. The intrapreneur's principal role is to develop disruptive ways of doing business, launching innovative products and services, and strengthening an innovative environment to stay competitive in the market. Hence, it can be said that "intrapreneurs" combine entrepreneurial traits, such as being drawn to change and proactively seeking it out, with the ability to work within the structure of their own organization.

¹ Perry, 2014

The role of intrapreneurs in successfully running startup programs

The core of a successful startup-corporate program is the quality of the relationship between the corporate and the startup. The deeper the need for integration, the more important this relationship becomes. There are many hurdles that can only be overcome by having a strong partner rooted deep inside the corporate structure. Intrapreneurs can take over the role of such a strong partner and assist in the following ways:

- ✓ Being compliant with internal processes
- ✓ Identifying the right people to connect with inside the organization
- ✓ Reaching out to stakeholders, particularly in an early phase to do test runs and
- ✓ Validate critical assumptions
- ✓ Convincing internal stakeholders to take risks, leaving well-defined corporate processes behind
- ✓ Accessing internal resources



Additionally, while startups might help you enter new markets, access new technologies or bring in new perspectives, you need more than that to stay at the top of your game. In fact, innovation needs to become a capability and should involve the whole organization. Today, there is an increasing body of knowledge that recognizes that intrapreneurship is a major driver for accelerating culture change and organizational transformation.² And that is not primarily a question of creativity alone; but positive attributes of intrapreneurs to develop the capability to capitalize on opportunities of change³. Next to multiple other benefits, such as driving team performance, intrapreneurs have an overall positive impact on:

Openness to change: Risk-averse culture and resistance to change impede an organization's ability to grow. Intrapreneurial leaders are change agents who are highly willing to change the status quo and absorb new technologies. Developing a culture where risk taking, acceptance of failure, and consequently, learning from it are promoted is essential to effectively accelerate and manage change within your organization.



"It must be allowed to try something new, otherwise we will surely fail in a long term."

Karl Gruber, Managing Director, Wien Energie GmbH

Engagement: Intrapreneurs do not just drive change but model change so others can change as well. Intrapreneurship therefore provides a platform for employees to stretch and grow, while keeping them engaged and inspired for the future.

² Seshadri and Tripathy, 2006

³ <https://corporate-entrepreneurs.com/2013/11/08/5-reasons-why-intrapreneurship-is-important/>

THE UNIQUE POWER OF INTRAPRENEURS

More specifically, intrapreneurs possess unique strengths that other – external – individuals (such as entrepreneurs or consultants) typically do not have, or at least not to the same extent. Having run various intrapreneurship programs, we want to highlight some of the major aspects in which intrapreneurs distinguish themselves from other employees or externals.

Intrapreneurs

- ✓ know the organization and its ecosystem
- ✓ act as a role model for other employees in the company and encourage behavioral change across the broader organization
- ✓ are a source of motivation, providing a fresh perspective and honest feedback to challenge those around them
- ✓ are loyal employees, who believe in the company and want to drive positive change within the organization
- ✓ spot inefficiencies in the workplace
- ✓ have a high willingness to take risks and introduce unconventional ideas
- ✓ support wider activities run by an innovation program to strengthen the overall innovative environment of the organization

That is why so many global companies like Bosch, Deutsche Bahn, GE, Cisco, etc. have started investing in intrapreneurs by organizing intrapreneurship programs such as Skydeck by DB Systel, BizLab by Airbus, or the New Business Initiative by Intel.

To put it into more dramatic words, the future of your organization rests on having strong intrapreneurs inside it. However, we know from studies that many companies lack intrapreneurs inside the organization⁵. Yet, encouraging employees to become intrapreneurs is not a task that comes without its difficulties.



"The participants of the Innovation Challenge⁴ spread the innovation spirit throughout the entire company. Months after the camp, you can see how the culture that has developed during the innovation challenge is spreading more and more in the house. This supports the new path of Wien Energie."

**Ilona Matusch, Corporate Communication,
Wien Energie GmbH**

⁴ Within the framework of the 3-day Innovation Challenge at Wien Energie, selected startups were invited to work jointly with employees on developing possible use cases for the company.

⁵ Seshadri and Tripathy, 2006; Ebner et al., 2008



SKYDECK: THE INTERNAL ACCELERATION PROGRAM OF DB SYSTEL

A short case study of Skydeck by DB Systel, which is one of WhatAVenture's success stories.

During the course of ten weeks, five selected teams from within DB Systel met weekly, including train-the-trainer/coach program during the two initial batches. The kick-off of the program was an intensive three-day offsite boot camp. Teambuilding, mutual learning, and critical feedback formed the basis for the following weekly acceleration days, where the teams met for sessions in the morning and worked on developing their ideas further in the afternoon.

A team of internal and external mentors allowed maximum leverage of the relevant stakeholder networks and constituted a key success factor of the program. The on-site and remote mentoring was followed by a follow-up status call two days after the workshop. A public graduation ceremony – the “demo day” – constituted the end of the program: each team was given the opportunity to present their prototype and business model to approximately 400 internal and external guests, providing a great platform for all the participants.

First results after three months of running the intrapreneurship program are

- ✓ 2 teams in “corporate venturing”
- ✓ 1 product listed in standard portfolio
- ✓ 12 client projects closed (by 3 teams)
- ✓ 1 idea invalidated

Identified key success factors are

- ✓ Overall the “right” program design for the specific “DNA” of DB Systel as a project-oriented IT service provider
- ✓ Team of internal and external mentors for maximum leverage of relevant stakeholder networks
- ✓ Strong focus on process and tools with systematic integration into quality gates, budget approval etc.

Find more innovation use cases on www.whataventure.com/use-cases

TURNING EMPLOYEES INTO INTRAPRENEURS: MAJOR CHALLENGES

The reason is simple. To become a successful intrapreneur means to overcome a number of critical hurdles⁶. Here are some of the prevailing hurdles that we have identified in the context of running intrapreneurship programs in different organizations:

- | **Resistance to change:** Being open for change despite prevailing tendencies toward self-satisfaction and the attachment to the status quo
- | **Risk adversity:** Coping with the high inherent risk of failure
- | **Setting priorities:** Expectations of the management and colleagues to handle day-to-day business as a priority
- | **Collaboration:** Internal competition and the fear that someone else might take your position
- | **Rewards:** Lack of adequate incentives to push new ideas
- | **Limited resources:** Very limited resources to push new ideas – working time and financial resources
- | **Know-how:** Lack of skills and experience on how to turn ideas into customer value
- | **Internal Structure:** Overcoming existing internal processes
- | **Endurance:** Limited patience in the executive team and the stakeholders in order to develop the idea to its full potential
- | **Interdivisional barriers:** Alignment between different departments (goal alignment, resources distribution, etc.)
- | **Joint forces:** Finding colleagues to actively collaborate and build functional groups within the organization to work together

The good news: There are numerous ways to face this situation. A proven way is to launch programs to empower intrapreneurs. While keeping the overall goal of the organization in mind, corporate executives can create good boundary conditions for an intrapreneurship program in their organization by taking the major building blocks into consideration.

⁶ <https://www.intrapreneurshipconference.com/4-keys-successful-intrapreneurship/>

CREATING INTRAPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMS: MAJOR BUILDING BLOCKS

There are many different ways to organize an intrapreneurship program. To give you an insight we have outlined the main building blocks by screening the DNA of major programs in the industry.

1. Type of innovation goal

An innovation can be as slight as a new flavor of an existing soft drink or as vast as the smartphone. That is why it is essential to think about what kind of innovation you are aiming for when you start designing your intrapreneurship program. We see four major categories of innovation goals: (1) developing new, innovative products or services for existing or new markets, (2) improving general processes, (3) positioning yourself as an innovative company and (4) improving internal culture.

Additionally, a main distinction can be drawn between incremental and disruptive innovation initiatives. The first one draws on assets that the company already has in place and characterizes efforts to make incremental changes to existing products and incremental inroads into new markets, e.g., in form of new packaging, slight reformulations, or added service convenience. The latter generally requires the company to call on unfamiliar assets, e.g., building capabilities to gain a deeper understanding of customers, to communicate on products that have no direct antecedents, and to develop markets that are not yet mature.⁷

- | What is your innovation goal?
- | Are you aiming for incremental vs. disruptive innovation?

Our Insight

Preparing meetings with the executive board allows the coordination of expectations. While the management often aims for radical innovation as a first reaction, we suggest striving for incremental projects during the first and/or second intrapreneurship program to preserve high internal motivation.



"As a modern and forward-looking technology company, innovation has to be a personal commitment of the CEO – it is a causa prima."

Dr. Leonhard Schitter, CEO Salzburg AG

2. People

Actually, this is the most important and challenging building block. We know that great teams are next to timing the most crucial factor in turning ideas into value. It takes many different people to succeed. It is not just a question of having the greatest people in your organization but also the right fit among them.

Hence, core questions are:

- | What levels of expertise do you need inside the teams to turn ideas into value? Oftentimes, the expertise needed to do the job cannot be sourced from within the organisation.
- | Which employees can you offer enough autonomy to develop independent solutions for your challenges? Before starting a program, you have to make sure that you are able to give them the required time resources to innovate.

Our Insight

Management commitment is a crucial factor for success. Heads of division that allow their most valuable employees to dedicate their time to the intrapreneurship program are sending a clear message to everyone in the company: we want to make the selected project a success!

3. Resources

To turn ideas into innovation takes time and resources. Having access to resources, such as capital, machinery, experts, etc., enables intrapreneurs to develop and validate their ideas faster. Obviously, this depends on the management expectations and the character of the project. Not only do you need a budget for your intrapreneurship program but you need a protected budget in particular. Being a part of an innovation team often also means having scarce resources inside an organization so you naturally depend on others. Make sure you set aside a budget because a protected budget helps ideas to succeed (otherwise, having a less successful quarter may lead to a reduction of your budget). Moreover, dedicating a budget toward running a proof of concept (PoC) to validate the business case, including developing a prototype to quickly test assumptions with potential users, can help avoid failures, and save time and money in the long run. So, the core questions are

- | How many resources can you dedicate to your employees to turn their ideas into success?
- | How much time and budget can you allocate toward your intrapreneurship program?

Our Insight

It is important to understand that working on intrapreneurship projects is as important for an employee as his/her day-to-day business. So, if an employee works 50% of his/her time on an intrapreneurship project, someone else would need to take over 50% of the employee's regular work and fill the gap.

4. Duration

The next question is the length of the program. Programs can have very different lengths and can range from days to years. Knowing one's expectations about the outcome of the program right from the start is thereby essential as the durations also depend on whether your focus is on cultural change within the organization or if you are driven by efficiency and results. Additionally, it is closely connected to the resources that you have available as mentioned previously. Therefore, the core questions are:

- | What is the starting point of the program? Do you start from trends, customer pains, ideas, or do employees already come up with first prototypes or a first business concept?
- | In consequence, what do you need to transfer the project successfully to the next step within your organization? This might be a roll-out via the business unit, a spin-off program, or financing through internal funds.

Our Insight

A limited time frame can lead to projects being developed and realized faster. At Wien Energie, a challenging spirit helped to faster overcome barriers along the intrapreneurship program's acceleration phase.

5. Space for new ideas (location)

Ideally, employees should have a setting in which they can be proactive and entrepreneurial on their own, and where a community of innovative talents can develop. Research has found that places which support innovation do so in multiple ways: they interrupt isolated structures to create stronger knowledge networks and build awareness between people and departments to better support the productive flow of ideas. Moreover, the setting considers proximity between people and groups to support planned and unplanned connectivity, which creates connections that increase communication and encourage the active sharing of information.⁸

- | How can you create spaces that support the individual while promoting feelings of group ownership and encouraging the shared sense of group purpose?

Our Insight

Innovation Hubs are a place for internal cultural education by providing physical contact points for employees as well as allowing high media presence for a company, as physical space is easy to exhibit.

6. Reward

Intrapreneurs are people. They need to know that their thoughts will be valued, their ideas developed, and that their work will contribute to a more dynamic and forward-looking business. It is vital that you find the right mix between intrinsic motivation, pursuing an activity due to its inherent satisfaction, and extrinsic motivation that is encouraged through for example reward or pressure. Therefore, financial rewards are important but not sufficient. The management must acknowledge their employees' ideas to further encourage and strengthen intrapreneurs in their work and bind them to the organization.

- | What makes the program attractive for your employees?
- | Are intrinsic motivations enough or what forms of extrinsic rewards exist within your organization or can you offer additionally?
- | How committed is the top management to the program and does it set a good example as a role model?

Our Insight

Paying close attention to what motivates your employees is essential for long-term success. Non-financial rewards can take many different forms, ranging from an inspirational trip to Silicon Valley, participation at conferences and leading industry events, to receiving attention and recognition on stage from executives.

7. Tool

Many formats are professionalized and structured by the use of the right tools. These tools contain work materials, software, and templates from the area of Lean Startup, Design Thinking, and Scrum. Consequently, working with the right tools helps building up sustainable project management structures and providing employees with access to resources to validate their business ideas. Therefore, WhatAVenture has developed the WhatAVenture Innovation Box, a toolkit that guides employees and entrepreneurs from developing their ideas to a validated business model in six easy-to-follow and well-structured steps. Learn more about the step-by-step guidance online on our lean innovation platform: www.whataventure.com/products/innovationplatform

Having now highlighted the major building blocks for creating intrapreneurship programs, it is time to take a closer look at what intrapreneurship models have been successfully used by companies around the world. As intrapreneurship largely depends on the organization's unique culture and context, there is no one recipe for how to do it. We, therefore, selected the key models that we, as WhatAVenture currently see in the market.

Our Insight

Our Insight: Providing intrapreneurship teams with a clear method helps them to develop a holistic and well-structured business model, while simultaneously saving time.

INTRAPRENEURSHIP MODELS

Typical entrepreneurship programs last from a few days to several months and are composed of the building blocks with different emphases. Please find next an overview of some of the main models that we observed in the market:

Find the right model for your innovation goal

#	Innovation Models	Type of innovation goal				Time to ROI ²
		Develop new, innovative products or services	Improve internal processes	Position yourself as an innovative company	Improve internal culture ¹	
1	Speed Boat Model	✓✓	✓✓			✓✓
2	Sprint Model	✓	✓✓		✓	✓
3	Entrepreneurship in Residence	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Time Off Model	✓	✓✓		✓✓	✓
5	Speed Lane Model	✓	✓		✓	
6	Tool Centered Model	✓	✓		✓	

¹ Innovation culture: a) Number of people you reach, b) Change in behavior achieved

² Time to ROI: Time needed to achieve return on investment

Evaluation categories: () no particular positive impact, (✓) positive impact, (✓✓) high positive impact

Speed Boat Model

The Speed Boat model is a process in which an autonomous team of internal experts, typically comprising 10–20 people, is set up as an individual department. Given their expertise in relevant fields, their main task is to generate new business ideas, validate these, and in a next step, return these ideas back to the operating business areas or to start with the execution. The focus throughout the process is on:

- | constantly developing new business ideas and
- | building an effective and efficient force with a high degree of expertise in the implementation of innovation projects.

Sprint Model

The Sprint Model is a process in which a team of employees temporarily (typically it is a five-day process, which has been inspired by Google Design Sprints) dedicate their time to an innovation project. Given their know-how in relevant fields, their main task is to generate new business ideas, validate these, and in a next step, return the ideas back to the operating business areas or to start with production. Moreover, the model forces teams to make faster decisions; there is no time to question outcomes or to look for more data to support certain aspects of a project. This process helps teams generate a large volume of ideas, build on them, learn from them and move forward in a compressed amount of time—which is how entrepreneurs work.

The focus throughout the process is on:

- | developing new business ideas and
- | building an effective force in the implementation of innovation projects

Entrepreneur in Residence

The target of this approach is to discover entrepreneurial talents from outside the company and to integrate them into newly created positions or programs. “Entrepreneurs in Residence” or the so-called intrapreneurs are given the freedom and the resources to build up holistic and visionary projects. Hiring someone external for a specific task facilitates internal arguments on why the position has been excluded from some bureaucratic processes. Moreover, strong result-oriented incentives lead to entrepreneurial actions by the talents. The focus of this program is on:

- | implementing innovative projects faster,
- | bringing specific expertise to the company, and
- | integrating entrepreneurial behavior into the company culture

Time Off Model

Australian software company, Atlassian, encourages employees to take “FedEx Days” – a paid time box off, in which people are not disturbed for regular work. First, participants must work on something that is explicitly not their day job – a personal passion project or an organizational pain point – where they decide for themselves what they will be working on, who they are going to work with, and how they are going to do it. Secondly, they must deliver something in 24 hours. The FedEx Day starts with the participants writing down what they intend to do, why they’re doing it, how much they expect to accomplish, and then pressure-test the idea with colleagues. It ends with a delivery report that can be a video, a blog post, or a screenshot that explains what an individual or a team did, and how it worked out (or how it did not).

- | Time-off can result in a boost of motivation and performance of employees in a very short time
- | The intense pace creates pressure to abandon hesitation and produce fearlessly.

Speed Lane Model

The target of this approach is to first filter the best internal available ideas and then provide the teams of employees with all the time necessary to realize it. In a first step, employees who already have a business idea are matched with employees that do not, but who are highly motivated to participate. Next, a strategy committee selects a small amount of ideas in pitches that take place throughout the year.

Selected topics receive a pre-determined budget (working time and external resources) and team members have to dedicate a pre-determined percentage of their resources to the project. After passing a second-pitching selection process, each team member dedicates all of his/her capacity to prepare for serial development.

- | Pre-selection of internally available ideas puts the focus on the most relevant ideas
- | Learn that product development cycles can be made leaner

Tool Centered Model

Many formats are professionalized and structured by the use of the right tools. These tools contain work materials, software, and templates from the area of Lean Startup, Design Thinking, and Scrum. Typically, intrapreneurship models involve many human resources. The advantage of the tool centered model is that no mentors are needed as teams can work on their business idea while receiving crucial guidance (and feedback) by the tool. The WhatAVenture Innovation Box is a toolkit that guides employees and entrepreneurs from developing their ideas to a validated business model. In six easy-to-follow and well-structured steps, people learn and apply all the successful startup methodology from one box, without extra resources. Similarly, the software leader Adobe released the Adobe Kick-Box, an innovation methodology toolkit that provides a blueprint for internal innovation as part of an open source, in 2014.

- | Access to resources for employees to validate their business ideas.
- | Building up sustainable project-management structures.



“Our employees have a high professional know-how, bring with them a lot of enthusiasm and are eager to develop themselves further. This must be encouraged.”

Dr. Leonhard Schitter, CEO Salzburg AG

DOING IT SUCCESSFULLY

Over the years of supporting many corporates to run intrapreneurship programs, we have put together a compilation of some of the major advises to be successful with your initiatives:

1. Stop generating ideas and start creating ROI instead

Many intrapreneurship programs put the major emphasis on creating ideas. The good news is, the idea is very often the starting point. The bad news is that an idea is the starting point. It is a simple equation: the more resources you invest in idea generation, the less resources you have for turning them into value-generating products and services. Make sure that you put your focus on turning ideas into valuable products.

2. Look for the right numbers at the right time

The major quality of ideas in an early phase is not a business case that shows millions based on assumptions but a strong team that is ready to iterate and adapt their idea until they are able to propose an exciting value proposition to customers. So, start looking for the right numbers at the right time, e.g., the number of ideas validated and the number of milestones reached on time.

3. Educate your executives

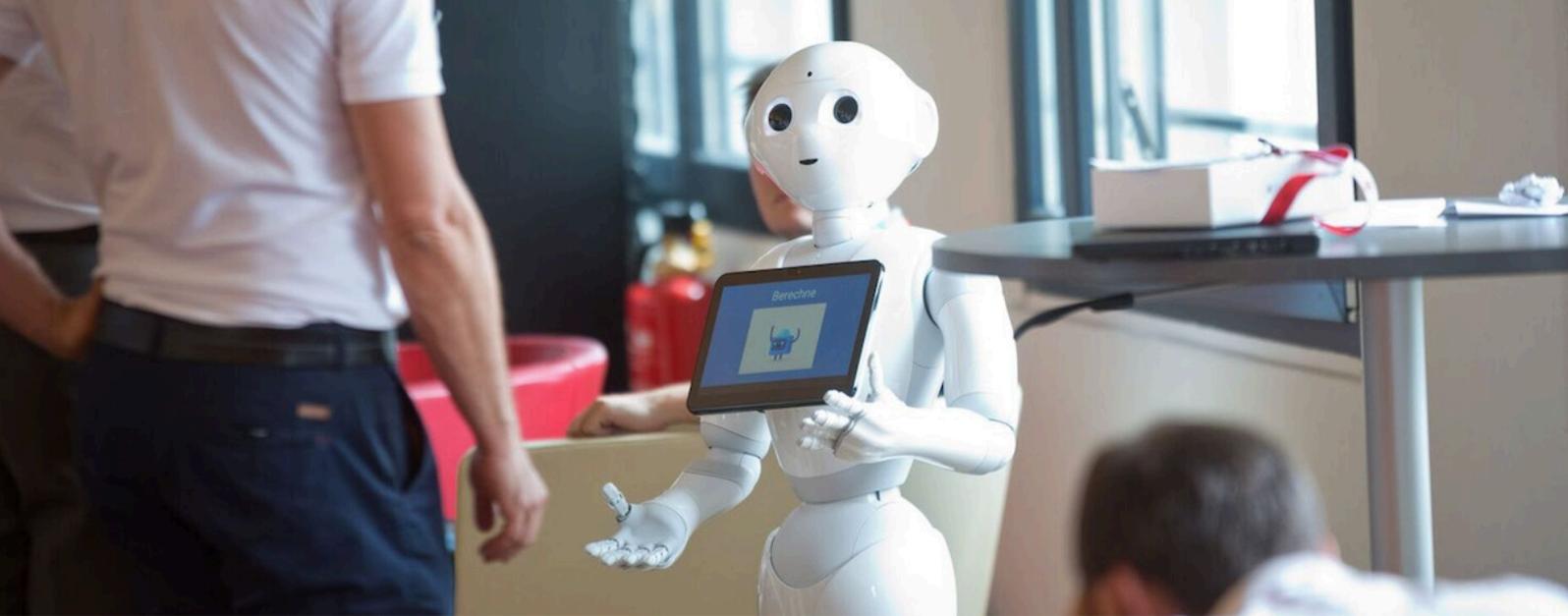
If you empower intrapreneurs, you need to make sure that the executives are ready to join the journey alongside them. In practice, this means providing room for iterations of the idea, accepting tests, and developing a learning mentality as well as quick failures. If your executives keep evaluating innovation projects in the same way as every other project, your intrapreneurs will not survive.

4. Make your programs sustainable

We think that organizations should follow a systematic approach toward innovation to achieve long-term success. On one side, this means to make sure that the participants of your programs are positive even though their idea has not made it to market; on the other side, it refers to establishing processes that drive efficiency up and bring down costs (see our Innovation Blog: www.whataventure.com/blog).

5. Intrapreneurship is about teams

Within a larger organization, you have many different roles besides intrapreneurs with the vision for the solution. You need to have a team of colleagues with the right skills and motivation to join the journey. In addition, you also need to have all the colleagues that are not officially part of the core team but support it in different ways such as giving feedback, providing budget, opening-up contacts as well as taking over their work while they are working on the solution. To make intrapreneurship sustainable, all those roles need to be considered and taken care of.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 | Your own employees are drivers of innovation and possess unique strengths that externals do not have or at least not to the same extent.
- 2 | A great team of colleagues with the right skills and motivation is one of the most crucial factors in turning ideas into value.
- 3 | Executives need to join the journey alongside intrapreneurs, providing room for iteration of an idea, accepting test, developing a learning mentality as well as accepting failure.
- 4 | Knowing your innovations goal, whether it is incremental or disruptive, is a major factor in setting up the right intrapreneurship program.

GET STARTED AND EMPOWER YOUR COMPANY'S MOST VALUABLE ASSET – YOUR PEOPLE

In today's context, where the source of power is knowledge, harnessing the full potential of the workforce is vital for a company's success. So, wherever you are on your transformational journey, take a moment to reflect on these learnings. Where do you locate your biggest pains in order to create an innovative and intrapreneurial organization? What can you do to address them?

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