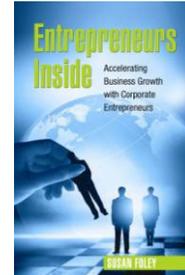# Entrepreneurs Inside
Accelerating Business Growth with Corporate Entrepreneurs

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Introduction

A top priority for many CEOs is business growth through innovation. Yet beyond the hype, the results from innovation are disappointing. Many CEOs do not think that they have the skills and capabilities to accomplish their growth agenda. They want to transform their organizations to become more entrepreneurial but it is proving elusive.

Much of the focus today is on entrepreneurship and its manifestations, those external organizations or start-ups created by entrepreneurs who have an innovative idea they want to exploit. Entrepreneurship inside organizations is called corporate entrepreneurship or Intrapreneurship, and refers to the formal and informal process of investing in new business initiatives, products or services, or business processes inside an existing organization. It is estimated that more than fifty percent of new ventures are created inside existing organizations.

Both entrepreneurship and corporate entrepreneurship are a viable means of creating business growth and stimulating the economy. They are similar in many respects and different in others. This book focuses on corporate entrepreneurship and the most effective way to build corporate entrepreneurship as a core competency. Corporate entrepreneurship provides the framework to support innovation and business growth.

Much of the academic research and business literature has been focused on entrepreneurial start-ups. As a result there is limited research in the area of corporate entrepreneurship, although this is changing thanks to a handful of progressive universities doing research in this area. The available research is a useful starting point for understanding corporate entrepreneurship, but it does not go far enough in defining the obstacles and hidden barriers to successfully implementing corporate entrepreneurship in an existing organization.

A key part of the problem is that many corporate executives still don't fully understand the difference between corporate entrepreneurs (Intrapreneurs) and entrepreneurs. The available research in the area of corporate entrepreneurship suggests that each group uses different processes, each representing a unique set of challenges and opportunities. Combine this with the shortage of role models at the top who fully understand the dynamics behind corporate entrepreneurship and you can see why organizations have not tapped into this valuable resource.

Entrepreneurial talent alone is not enough, but it is a starting point. In her article "The Age of Entrepreneurial Tolerance," Elizabeth W. McBeth at the Joseph L. Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto, put it this way: "The most sought after professional for the 21st century economy will be a breed of corporate entrepreneurs, or Intrapreneurs, whose education and experience are both broad and deep and who have the skills for identifying and exploiting opportunities, fostering team-based innovation, creativity, and managing change."

Many companies may be letting significant growth opportunities slip by because they are not effectively harnessing the most able business builders they've got: their corporate entrepreneurs (Intrapreneurs.) The lack of focus in many companies on this very important role and the limited research are key impediments to leveraging this valuable resource. The long-term consequence: a talent drain that is steadily robbing companies of whatever entrepreneurial edge they may have had.

There is no need to dwell on why entrepreneurial skills are needed in Corporate America today. Read any Wall Street analyst's report and you'll hear the growth drumbeat right away. Nor is it necessary to repeat the calls to institutionalize corporate entrepreneurship as a way to gain a competitive advantage.

Aligning an organization's systems and processes to support corporate entrepreneurship is critical to building entrepreneurial capabilities. Existing systems and processes often thwart an organization's efforts to become more entrepreneurial. Resistance to change is one key obstacle; others include funding, a lack of commitment, and short-term focus. Developing corporate entrepreneurship as a core competency takes time and practice to perfect. The best way to become entrepreneurial is to *be* entrepreneurial. Experimentation and action learning are the two ways to accelerate your organization's learning.

As an experienced corporate entrepreneur, I was frustrated by the lack of reference material that actually looked inside the world of the corporate entrepreneurs. Most of the material was written by individual observers about the process, instead of by the participants who actually experienced the process. Reading about the theory provides a solid foundation, but it does not provide the essence of what it is like to see the process through the eyes of corporate entrepreneurs. It does not matter what you call them -- corporate entrepreneurs, Intrapreneurs, mavericks, positive deviants, business builders or entrepreneurial leaders -- this book was written for them with help from them.

A group of experienced corporate entrepreneurs across a diverse set of industries participated in this book's development. They were senior executives, many who reported directly to the CEO. Some were responsible for building billion dollar businesses in their organizations. Some managed their own business units and were committed to building the entrepreneurial capabilities within their own group. A few managed multi-million dollar technology investments, some managed incubators and others created their own skunk-works in the core business.

They contributed their time to the development of some of the corporate entrepreneuring tools discussed throughout the book. They shared their experiences of being corporate entrepreneurs, their greatest achievements and biggest disappointments. They provided new insight and understanding about what it means to be a corporate entrepreneur. They found comfort in knowing others who understood what they were going through. They were intelligent, highly motivated and energized about being a corporate entrepreneur, and they encouraged the writing of this book. I am grateful for their time, wisdom, and enthusiasm.

My goal is to provide you with the best insight, real-world experience, and truths that make corporate entrepreneurship one of the most exciting and motivational things your organization can do to achieve new business growth. Unlike some of the textbooks that lay out the theory behind corporate entrepreneurship, this book will take you inside the

world of corporate entrepreneurship. You will see corporate entrepreneurship through the lens of the entrepreneurial leader, the team, and the organization.

My intent is to offer an insider's view of the challenges and opportunities that corporate entrepreneurs will face, and the roles and responsibilities of entrepreneurial leaders in ensuring that the corporate venture thrives inside the organization.

Chapters 1, 2 and 3 provide an overview of corporate entrepreneuring. Theses chapters explore corporate entrepreneuring as a business process, the entrepreneurial framework needed to support it, navigating organizational obstacles and the use of project management to instill discipline. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 take a look at the behaviors, competencies and dynamics of the key players; corporate entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial leaders and teams. Chapters 7, 8 and 9 look at the three key building blocks of corporate entrepreneurship; creativity, innovation and change. Chapter 10 looks at the ultimate end game, execution.

If you are an executive trying to integrate the entrepreneurial spirit into your organization, this book will help you understand how to do it. The book will discuss ways in which you can evaluate your organization to see how entrepreneurial it is. It can help you identify key individuals in your organization who have the potential to be entrepreneurial leaders.

If you are a professional who is unsure whether you are a corporate entrepreneur, you will gain better insight into the attributes of a corporate entrepreneur. You will be able to relate to real-life examples of how corporate entrepreneurial teams operate and how they deal with uncertainty, adversity, and resistance.

If you are working in an academic institution, I hope that this book will inspire you to continue to do more multi-disciplinary research on corporate entrepreneurship.

Every day that goes by without utilizing your company's entrepreneurs is a day further away from reaching your growth goals. Let's get started with a look at corporate entrepreneurship.

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