

# Innovation in the Shadows

## Intrapreneurs Among Us



We are all familiar with the term Entrepreneur. The term leaders at Covenant Health should be focused on is Intrapreneur. An Intrapreneur is an employee working within our organization who thinks a little differently than the masses. They seek out change, exude creativity, and look to innovate everything around them. Generally, their urge to pivot the typical to the extraordinary is simply a part of their DNA.

As a leader at Covenant, do you have an Intrapreneur who works for you? If not, can you honestly say that you have taken the time to know for sure? For the benefit of the organization, please take the opportunity to observe your employees for the following qualities:

1. **They are self-motivated.** Intrapreneurs do not need you to push them. They just do what is required without your intervention. These employees typically engage in side hustles and take it upon themselves to implement small improvements around the workplace. These side hustles frequently happen under the radar. This is often the case because they feel that too much visibility might inhibit their progress.
2. **They are not solely driven by extrinsic rewards.** We all understand that money matters to a point, but it is never the prime focus of the true Intrapreneur. Intrapreneurs are driven internally by freedom, personal vision, and the ability to spend some of their free time on pet projects that ignite their passion.
3. **They are always seeking out new knowledge.** Are there a couple of employees in your department who is often seen carrying around a leadership book or technical manual? Are they constantly asking you “why” or questioning the validity of a current process?
4. **They are natural innovators.** Have you watched an employee latch onto a concept and try to apply it to the operations within your department? Have they sought out data to justify an idea? Have they asked to lead an initiative within your area? If this does not happen within your team, have you considered that your employees may not feel comfortable asking you for more responsibility?
5. **They are agile.** Can they think and fail fast? That is, can they launch into a project and immediately pivot away if they hit a dead end? When this happens, are they typically unfazed and immediately move on to their next challenge? Intrapreneurs are not generally discouraged by small failures unless corporate culture dictates it. To them, each misstep is just a rung on the ladder that leads to their next accomplishment.

Intrapreneurs are guided by their desire and vision for change. They can't be defined simply by title, the current level of influence, or formal education. They are engaged, dedicated, and driven to fix what is broken within their daily routines. Unfortunately, if these highly desired behaviors are not nurtured, these dynamic employees can quickly become bored, disengaged, and lose interest in their positions. The quickest path to discouraging an Intrapreneur is to cripple them through bureaucracy and micro-management.

Many of the most successful companies in business today embrace and promote Intrapreneurship. Apple, Amazon, Google, Intuit, and DaVita Healthcare are just a few examples. They actively encourage participation at all levels of the organization and depend on their employees to bring their ideas to the table. At these companies, title and position are never prerequisites to contributing to the overall success of the organization.

My hope in writing this quick tip is that my fellow Intrapreneurs will be encouraged by our leaders to come out of the shadows. These employees would appreciate any opportunity you could afford them to lead a project or team. Truthfully, they don't just crave these additional responsibilities, they need them to remain engaged.

Once you take the initiative to identify and empower that Intrapreneur in your department, you may discover that your team is full of them. Let them lead. Do your part in pushing leadership down a level or two in the organization. This is vital to Covenant's success and part of Jim's leadership strategy going forward. By collectively recognizing and encouraging Intrapreneurism throughout our organization, we will take one more step toward excellence in everything we

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