



# The 10 Commandments of Intrapreneuring

Most innovation doesn't come from small startups in Silicon Valley. Innovation in big companies is vibrant and essential. The term intrapreneur--entrepreneurs who operate in a big company--was popularized by Gifford Pinchot in his book *Intrapreneuring*. Pinchot described his "10 Commandments of an Intrapreneur," which I modernized and share with you here.

# The 10 Commandments of Intrapreneuring

If you choose the path of an entrepreneur, it's not an easy one. You'll need to break some eggs. These commandments are a Northstar for intrapreneurs.

## 1 Come to work willing to be fired (and have a plan B)

Entrepreneurs are bold. They take risks. Many big companies don't attract risk-takers. Intrapreneurial companies do. Don't take this too literally, though! Intrapreneurs don't take unnecessary risks, and always have a plan B.

## 2 Circumvent any orders aimed at stopping your mission.

New efforts in big companies get attacked. Get ready for them. Circumvent those attacks. Don't waste energy on doubters. Use your sponsor to keep them at bay.

## 3 Do any job needed to make your project work.

Regardless of your job description. Ron Shaich, CEO and founder of Panera Bread, started by selling cookies. He had one 400-square foot store in Boston called The Cookie Jar. He sold cookies outside the store himself. He interviewed customers himself. He changed the recipe based on what he learned. He had three employees, but he did every job. No job is too small.

## 4 Find people to help you

Intrapreneurs need sponsors and mentors. Sponsors are executives that can fund and push an agenda. Mentors are other intrapreneurs inside or outside of your company. Both will have your back. A way to test if a sponsor is good is to share these commandments! Discuss them. Do they seem to "get it?" You be the judge.

## 5 Hire Intrapreneurs

When you build a team of intrapreneurs, choose talent and passion. Keep the team small yet functionally complete. Think like three people in a garage. Sponsors: democratize the data your team needs.

## 6 Work underground as long as you can.

Startups stay in stealth mode for a reason. They're learning and failing. In a big company, traditional managers will want to publicize what you're doing. Stay in stealth mode as long as you can.

## 7 Never bet on a race unless you're running in it.

True innovation can take years. As an intrapreneur, take a long view of success. Ideas are a dime a dozen. Idea execution takes time, work, and lots of failure. Don't rush.

## 8 It's easier to ask for forgiveness than permission.

The corporate immune system will always say no. Take risks with your sponsor's support. See commandment #4.

## 9 Be true to your goals, but be realistic.

Be true to your goal, but be realistic about the ways to achieve them. Venture investors fund innovation in waves: A, B, C, and D rounds. At each stage the innovation get progressively bigger and more mature. A rounds are for version 1.0 products. They usually suck. B rounds are usually for version 2, and lighthouse customers. These phases can take years. Don't go too big too soon. Be realistic.

## 10 Honor your sponsors.

Find leaders who are intrapreneurs. Work with them.