

CHAPTER 13

Intrapreneurship: Adding Entrepreneurial Value and Innovation within a Corporation



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There has been a lot of talk lately about the success of women. Much of this discussion has been related to women in the corporate environment, the pay disparity experienced by women, and the lack of women on corporate boards and in senior level positions—more commonly referred to as the glass ceiling. While the economy is doing marginally better, women’s pay is doing marginally worse.

For much of the past three decades, the wage gap between men and women began to shrink. But according to a new study from the Institute for Women’s Policy Research, progress has slowed in recent years, and the wage gap has actually widened during the current recovery. In 2012, women working full time earned 80.9 percent of what men earned in terms of weekly pay—a drop from 82.2 percent in 2011, according to the IWPR study. In terms of annual earnings, women lagged men even further, making just 77 percent of what men earned, half a percentage point down from 2011. In dollar terms, that meant that women working full time earned an average of \$691 a week in 2012, less than they had in 2011, while men earned \$854 on average, which marked a small gain over their 2011 earnings. (The study did not evaluate men’s and women’s earnings in comparable jobs or life choices, and it excluded part-time jobs.) Compared to where they were earning decades ago, in many industries, women are closer to earning what men do. Progress had already been slowing for years, and this recent setback means that it may likely be even longer before women earn as much as men across all industries.

This stagnant growth is one of the reasons entrepreneurship has become increasingly attractive to women. However, not everyone has the luxury to strike out on her own. Thus, depending on the organization and its culture, intrapreneurship is increasingly becoming

a viable option as it allows employees the opportunity to function like an entrepreneur, while working within a corporation. As more and more businesses are realizing the importance of nurturing and encouraging entrepreneurial thinking among their employees to help drive growth and innovation, intrapreneurship has become a way for women to exercise their entrepreneurial instincts without incurring the risks and uncertainty that full entrepreneurship requires.

Intrapreneurship has also thrived, as these employees are often highly valuable executives and team members who may perhaps never become a company founder, but are recognized for the value that they bring to the company. They have learned to apply the essential principles of entrepreneurship to the roles they play within an existing company and not to let bureaucratic barriers stop them from driving constructive change. Further, they have a strong understanding of the culture within which they are operating and have learned how to navigate around the roadblocks of corporate structure, tedious management, or the traditional corporate or government bureaucracy. Additionally, they have convinced senior management that their new ideas have the potential to be both profitable and synergistic to the goals of the company, and are entrusted to bring their visions to life.

Lisa Lambert is Vice President and Managing Director of Software and Services and Diversity Equity Fund for Intel Capital. She shares her story of how her background in technology became the perfect fit in her role at Intel and how she created an opportunity to become the most accomplished and experienced African American woman in venture capital in the United States.

A Career Anomaly

Lisa's career in technology began after she obtained her BS in management information systems. She was trained in business information systems and compiled programming languages such as Cobol,

Pascal, Fortran, PL1, and in a number of application server development tools for Windows, MPE, and Unix operating system environments. Her first professional job was working as a software developer in the information technology (IT) department at Owens-Corning, where she supported IT operational functions and designed and debugged software in their manufacturing facilities and for their product groups. She had an aptitude for coding; however, she was ready to move her career to the next level. Yet she knew that in order to advance, she would need to get her MBA, so she quit her job and enrolled in Harvard University.

After earning her MBA from Harvard, she knew she wanted to join a technology company and live in California. She joined Intel Corporation in 1997 where she worked in technical marketing. She soon grew inquisitive about other opportunities at Intel as she did not feel she was using all of the skills she had acquired with her hard-earned MBA. She desired an opportunity to combine her technical background with her business acumen. Moving to Intel Capital seemed like an obvious fit.

“There are very few women in venture capital,” says Lisa. “Black females? Almost none. Venture capital is an industry made up of private partnerships that recruit similar people from known networks, thereby resulting in an exclusive, rather than inclusive environment. In reality, it’s a complete anomaly that I’m even in this game,” she adds.

Knowing Your Worth

Over the next decade, Lisa was promoted every other year on her merits. She contributed to the company by making financially and strategically successful investments, and she was rewarded. By her tenth year, she aspired to be a corporate officer at the VP level. At Intel, this is a very big deal because the company placed significant value on the notion that great ideas can come from anywhere. They are cautious about titles that create a perception of hierarchy that

might inhibit the free flow of innovation. As a result, very few VPs are named. It is a sophisticated process that involves more than a traditional performance review. Nominations are solicited through executive staff members, and a nominee's work is rigorously evaluated by the executive management committee, with veto rights given to Intel's CEO.

As Lisa considered applying, she saw strengths and weaknesses, but concluded that she had the data to support her case. The performance of her investment portfolio was solid, and her promotions spoke for themselves. Her staff and peer relationships were also a positive, though she needed to continue to network and reach out to other departments. Visibility is important, because the more people who can speak to a candidate's work, the more beneficial it is for the candidate.

It was an intimidating process with a very high failure rate, so it was critical for Lisa to throw herself into it and leave behind any fear and doubt. Like everything else that Lisa set out to accomplish, she developed a strategic approach to achieving this goal. She filled out the application and set meetings with several key decision-makers. By making her aspirations clear, she received support from several sponsors who had been advocating for her career development along the way as part of the Intel Network of Executive Women. "This network provided invaluable input and helped move my nomination forward," says Lisa. She continued her day-to-day work, determined to maintain a standard of excellence. Over the next several months, she anxiously awaited any news on the appointment. After a rigorous interview process (she interviewed with six people), she got the job.

When she finally received the news, she learned that not only had she earned the position but she had managed to secure it in her first year of application, which rarely happens. To her, this was like being inducted into the Hall of Fame. "It was a monumental achievement," recalls Lisa, "not so much about the appointment but

by the fact that I had taken the risk and been recognized for my contribution and my potential.”

By finding her niche within the organization, Lisa has been extremely successful. She achieved tremendous accomplishments and for the past ten years, her investments have realized a cumulative internal rate of return of 27 percent, with several of the companies she has invested in going public or being acquired. “My first investment to deliver an 800 percent return and my largest career investment of \$218.5 million, were extraordinary experiences,” says Lisa. “I enjoyed each of those moments and learned from all of them.”

An Upward Calling

While Lisa has enjoyed a number of significant successes throughout her career, she considers the founding of her not-for-profit, Upward, as the most meaningful experience that she has had to date. The mission of Upward is to accelerate career advancement for senior professional women (director level and above). She began the organization in her home in 2013, when 90 women gathered for dinner and networking. The organization grew to over 1,500 members in 18 months. In 2014, she launched the first international chapter in Israel. Additional affiliates will be launched in London, England; Bangalore, India; Portland, Oregon; and Austin, Texas.

McKinsey and Company completed a study citing structural reasons why women do not advance professionally, including a lack of access to informal networks and a lack of mentors and sponsors. Lisa created Upward largely to address those problems in an attempt to change the demographics and culture in corporations globally, helping more women get a seat in both the boardroom and at the executive table. “It’s difficult for me to imagine in the twenty-first century that women still only earn 77 cents for every dollar men earn for the same job,” she says, “and that women only represent 12 percent of the Fortune 500 boards, 4 percent of the Fortune

500 CEO positions, and only 13 percent of the Fortune 500 executive office positions. This is despite the fact that women make up half of the world's population and, in America, women compose 51.5 percent of the professional workforce, earn the majority of college and advanced degrees, and head two-thirds of households. In the venture capital industry, the data is even more bleak, where only 4 percent of general partners are women and practically no minorities have any positions in the industry.”

“My goal is to help change this with Upward, and in so doing, to help create wealth and prosperity for women that benefits society as a whole.”

50 Billion Dollar Boss Moves

As more and more businesses are realizing the importance of nurturing and encouraging entrepreneurial thinking among their employees to help drive growth and innovation, to develop an “intrapreneurial” mind-set, you should:

- Know your worth;
- Make your aspirations clear;
- Maintain a standard of excellence;
- Develop a support system or join groups that can advocate for your success; and
- Find areas where you can create and add value.