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How to make the whole of your medium-sized enterprise more intrapreneurial

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Abstract

Intrapreneurship usually involves some parts of an existing enterprise becoming more innovative, more ‘entrepreneurial’. But how can *all* parts of an enterprise become more intrapreneurial? This research studied how change leaders/managers manage intrapreneurship processes in all parts of an existing medium-sized enterprise in particular. Our contribution is the first study that focuses on managing whole-of-enterprise intrapreneurship processes in medium-sized enterprises, and includes not-for-profit enterprises. With extant literature as an initial guide, we used convergent interviewing and case research methodologies to find that a whole-of-enterprise approach to intrapreneurship is linked to practices that include its intuitive approach to risk management, its approach to protecting the enterprise’s reputations, its inclusive business planning, and its absence of fear from failure. Implications for managers are drawn, ranging from focussing on an enterprise’s purpose through to a learning culture.

Keywords: entrepreneurship; intrapreneurship; change leadership; change management; SME; convergent interviewing; case research; risk management; medium-sized enterprise.

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Introduction

The pressures of global competition and associated processes of change have increased the demand for change leadership and intrapreneurship (Antoncic 2007; Thornberry 2003). In particular, an existing enterprise's competitiveness can be based on the extent to which it can be intrapreneurial; that is, how it innovates, and reacts quickly and flexibly to changing market conditions and demands (Jeong et al. 2006; Kenney & Mujtaba 2007). There has been some research about intrapreneurship activities in larger enterprises where, for example, a skunk works team is formed to carry out the actions of intrapreneurship. However, that previous research about the obstacles faced by intrapreneurs is limited to strategies that apply to only a part of the enterprise such as a skunk works team, rather than to intrapreneurialism throughout an enterprise (Hornsby et al. 2009).

Moreover, there is little literature to guide managers in medium-sized enterprises in particular about how they should manage their whole-of-enterprise intrapreneurship processes. (In this research, a medium-sized enterprise is a company that employs more than 20 employees and less than 200 employees - the Australian definition (Australian Government Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research 2011).) This gap is relevant because managers in a medium-sized enterprise could aim for intrapreneurship *throughout* the enterprise, while managers in a larger enterprise would usually not be able to do so because of its more huge bureaucratic inertia. And a medium-sized enterprise could provide opportunities to develop whole-of-enterprise intrapreneurship for innovation about issues that are more complex than the start-up issues of smaller enterprises. In particular, there is limited research about how a change leader/manager can manage such intrapreneurship processes (Gapp & Fisher 2007; Jensen & Luthans 2006). This research's contribution fills these gaps.

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Thus, this research focuses on the under-researched nature of intrapreneurial practices in medium-sized enterprises. The research problem addressed is: *How do change leaders/managers manage intrapreneurship processes in medium-sized enterprises?* The research focuses on enterprise culture, structure and policy, learning strategies, risk management, and creativity and innovation leading to intrapreneurship. Essentially, this research argues that change leader/managers must embed innovation and creativity by developing the intrapreneurial mindset of the whole enterprise, and develop policies and structures that facilitate rather than obstruct the nature of intrapreneurship, particularly when managing risk. They must also deploy learning strategies that equip all staff with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for intrapreneurship.

One justification for this research is the empirically demonstrated linkage between intrapreneurship and firm growth in several countries (Antonicic 2007). Another justification for the research is the nature, size and importance of medium-sized enterprises within their SME sector. For example, in Australia, they contribute 22 percent of all economic value added (Australian Government Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research 2011). Furthermore, this research includes not-for-profit (NFP) enterprises among medium-sized enterprises because they are significant - they contribute 5.2 percent of the US GDP, for example (Kay 2008) - but there is little information in the literature about how a change leader can manage intrapreneurship in NFP enterprises (Kong 2010).

This report has four parts after this Introduction. First, a conceptual framework and its five research issues about lacunae in the literature are developed to guide data collection and analysis. Then the methodologies of convergent interviewing and case research are justified and described. Next, the data is analysed. Finally, implications of the research are explored, and limitations and further research are presented.

In this report, ‘entrepreneurship’ is the process of creating value by bringing together a unique combination of resources to exploit an opportunity, usually by establishing a new enterprise (Kuratko & Hodgetts 2007). In turn, ‘intrapreneurship’ is behaving

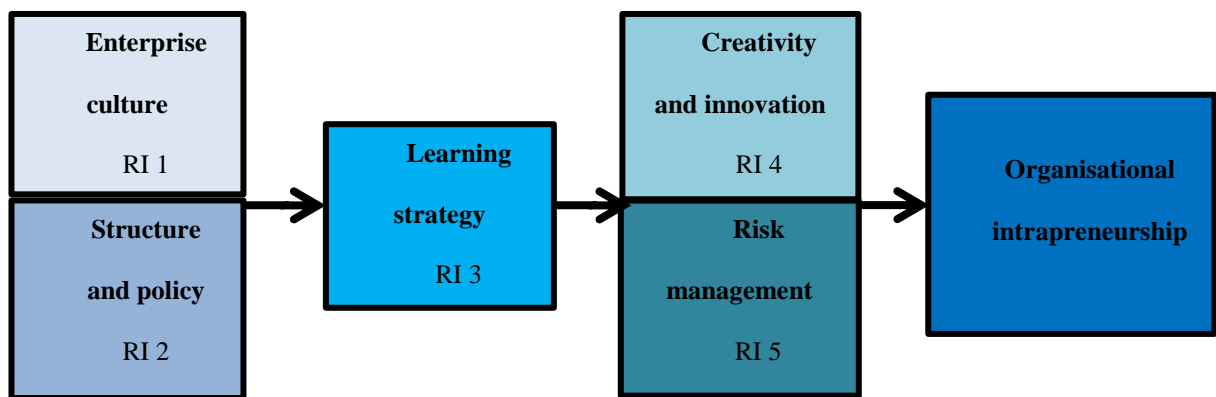
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‘entrepreneurially’ in an existing SME or larger enterprise, that is, it is the spirit of entrepreneurship within an existing organisation (Antoncic & Hisrich 2003). The term ‘change leader’ will refer to the senior manager or managers who want to make the whole of their medium-sized enterprise more intrapreneurial.

Conceptual framework

The first step was developing a conceptual framework based on the extant, background literature that could guide data collection and analysis about the research problem. The framework is summarised in Figure 1 and explained next.

Figure 1 **Conceptual framework**



Culture, structure and policies. This research aims to identify the corporate culture and supporting structure and policy that facilitates intrapreneurship. Consider culture first. There has been extensive research on corporate culture (Politis 2005; Srivastava & Srivastava 2010), but little research has linked that culture to whole-of-enterprise intrapreneurship (Gapp & Fisher 2007). Thus, there is a gap relating to culture’s impact on achieving whole-of-enterprise intrapreneurship, rather than its impact on teams or individuals empowered to act outside of the core business of the enterprise. In medium-sized enterprises with fewer of the 'right' people with the appropriate cultural fit (the mindset that fits the enterprise's intrapreneurial objective) and who are inappropriately skilled, is there a need to take people through a change program (Hamilton 2008)? And will this culture be more market-

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(effectiveness) or operations- (efficiency) oriented (Jones & Rowley 2011; Wales et al. 2013)? Thus, this research will examine the approach that change leaders take to develop the culture of the enterprise, and these are incorporated in RI 1 in Figure 1.

After culture, consider structure and policies. A contemporary enterprise's culture should facilitate the autonomy necessary for creativity and innovation for all individuals in the organisation. The development of organisational characteristics like suitable structure and relevant policies should support the autonomy that enables innovative minded individuals (Antoncic 2007; Kerzner & Saladis 2011), as indicated by RI 2 in Figure 1. But, as organisations mature, they may become bureaucratised by the constraints imposed on them by the structure and policy that was intended to aid in their competitive status (Zimmerman 2010).

Thus, two research issues that have been developed to examine the enterprise's culture and its policy and structure:

RI 1. *How do change leaders develop the culture of a medium-sized enterprise to facilitate intrapreneurship?*

RI 2. *How do internal structures and policies impact on intrapreneurship in medium-sized enterprises?*

Learning. The third research issue examines the learning strategies that intrapreneurial enterprises deploy to develop, promote and facilitate intrapreneurship, as shown by RI3 in Figure 1. Individual, organisational and intrapreneurial learning approaches are necessary to be competitive in a knowledge economy (Franco & Haase 2009; Senge 2006). But learning involves both sides of the brain, left-brain logical and right-brain intuitive (Jensen 2000; Pink 2006), and intrapreneurship processes need to be nurtured and learned over time.

Intrapreneurs may develop intrapreneurial skills through intuiting, however, intrapreneurial learning from intuiting is difficult to articulate, and may be limited as a learning approach when enterprises are trying to develop the whole organisation in intrapreneurial skills (Sambrook & Roberts 2005; Zuber-Skerritt 2002). Thus, there is a gap in research about how

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skills and knowledge gained from intuiting can be shared among others and transferred to organisational learning (Sutton & Pfeffer 2000).

Furthermore, organisational learning is limited by the learning culture of the enterprise. In particular, it is limited by the level of genuine commitment that the enterprise has to learning (Zuber-Skerritt 2011). Learning is more than a policy, it must be an action that evolves from a culture that nurtures learning and balances formal and informal learning approaches with learning by doing. It must be a tool that all employees can grasp (Franco & Haase 2009). In turn, existing research identified that interpreting and motivation are two basic processes that occurs between the different levels of learning.

But there are conflicting arguments about embedding formal learning approaches into enterprises. On one hand, there is some support that formal or forceful learning approaches are not conducive to intrapreneurial enterprises (Baker & Sinkula 2009). On the other hand, there is evidence that organisational and individual learning approaches can be formally developed to enhance intrapreneurship (Franco & Haase 2009). So are formal learning strategies suitable for intrapreneurial medium-sized enterprises or not? What other strategies could be used? Thus, the third research issue has been developed to confirm or disconfirm conflicting research findings:

RI 3 How do change leaders deploy learning strategies in medium-sized enterprises?

Creativity and innovation. Next, the conceptual framework incorporates creativity and innovation and how they lead to intrapreneurship, as shown by RI 4 in Figure 1 (Duggan 2007). (Creativity is thinking up new ideas and innovation is implementing those new ideas (Kuratko & Hodgetts 2007).) Current approaches focus primarily on the characteristics of intrapreneurs rather than the linked activities that may lead to embedded creativity and innovation that leads to intrapreneurship (Gapp & Fisher 2007). So the process of embedding creativity and innovation is not fully examined in previous research. So this research will examine how change leadership skills and a medium-sized enterprise's structure can foster and sustain the commitment and participation needed for creativity and innovation, as

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indicated in RI 4 in Figure 1. The fourth research issue has been developed to address this gap:

RI 4. *How do change leaders embed creativity and innovation into medium-sized enterprises?*

Risk. Finally, the conceptual framework includes the application of risk management and how it impacts on intrapreneurship, as indicated by RI 5 in Figure 1. There are various opinions in extant research relating to risk management and how it is applied in enterprises to assist the actions of intrapreneurship (Douglas & Fitzsimons; Martiarena 2013). Although intrapreneurs appear ruthless and gamble risk to achieve wealth and success, most intrapreneurs work hard at reducing risk through effective planning and act mostly on informed and calculated risk (Rubin 2000; Timmons & Spinelli 2007). This attitude may exist in smaller enterprises where the whole of the enterprise is at risk. But does it exist in medium-size enterprises with their different types of risk?

Furthermore, risk management approaches have been identified in the literature as a potential barrier for overly cautious leaders (Antoncic & Hisrich 2001, 2003). Researchers identified that small business entrepreneurs are more likely to be risk takers than intrapreneurs in larger organisations ((Martiarena 2013). But they did not determine if risk management was influenced by the structure or nature of the organisation (size of enterprise, type of enterprise such as NFP or commercial enterprises) or the characteristics of the leader. To address this gap, this research will evaluate the approaches to managing risk and the impact they have on creativity and innovation. Thus, the fifth research issue relating to risk management and its impact on creativity and innovation is:

RI 5. *How do change leaders manage risk in medium-sized enterprises without undermining the nature of intrapreneurship?*

In brief, the initial conceptual framework was used to guide the research process aimed at bridging the gaps identified and to confirm or disconfirm conflicting arguments relating to intrapreneurship in medium-sized commercial and NFP enterprises.

Two stages of data collection

Because of the lack of existing theories about the research problem noted above, a qualitative methodology was more suitable for this research's theory building emphasis than a quantitative methodology. Qualitative methods address theory building rather than theory testing (Parkhe 1993). The intensity and detail of qualitative data is achieved by getting both physically and psychologically nearer to the phenomenon (Merriam 2002).

Stage 1: convergent interviewing. After confirming that qualitative methodologies were suitable for this research, it was necessary to choose the methodology for stage 1. *Convergent interviewing* is a cyclic series of in-depth interviews that allows the researcher to refine the question after each interview to converge on the issues in a topic area (Rao & Perry 2007; Carson et al. 2001) - it is a series of 'successive approximations' (Dick 1990, p. 3). For example, the first interview may be unstructured and contain flexible questions, but as the interviews progress they converge on the emerging key issues. Thus it was an appropriate methodology to see if the research's questions should go beyond those suggested by the extant literature.

In qualitative research, the sampling method to select interviewees is purposeful rather than random (Patton 2002). In stage 1, we started with two knowledgeable people who did not know each other, and after each of their interviews they were asked to recommend other people who should be interviewed (Rao & Perry 2007). This snowball sampling technique identified seven later interviewees and is appropriate when research is concerned with a small, specialised population of people who are knowledgeable about the topics (Patton 2002). The Australian Industry Group also helped identify key industry figures suitable for the research. Three of the five interviewees were senior executives with considerable experience of change leadership and/or intrapreneurship. The other two interviewees were academics who had studied this field directly or indirectly for considerable periods of time.

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At the end of each interview, a detailed summary of the key issues was raised in priority order. This summary included the words of the interviewee, and was usually written within one hour of the interview during or after listening to the tape recording (Carson et al. 2001; Rao & Perry 2007). After the summary was made, the issues were assessed for agreement or disagreement with earlier interviews, and so all the important issues in all the interviews were eventually included in the analysis.

Also at the end of each interview, interviewees were asked to comment on the initial conceptual framework. They confirmed all elements of the framework developed from the literature. For example, interviewee B stated that the framework needed to emphasise what elements enable them to be intrapreneurial, '*The framework and process concept is right... but training strategies enable the organisation and its people... [they] should be added*'. But interviewees C, D and E all suggested or supported the need for the enterprise purpose to be considered upfront - the purpose of the enterprise will determine all other facets of the business. These comments were explored in the second stage of case research.

Stage 2: case research. For the second stage of this study, *case research* was appropriate. The research problem has little extant research available and involves a series of complex contemporary events (Carson et al. 2001; Stokes & Perry 2007). In other words, case research is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, and is especially appropriate when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin 2009). That is, the case research for this research seeks to address how and why questions in the research problem and research issues; the researcher had no control over actual behaviour of the people to be interviewed; the research did not require control over behavioural events during the research; and it focused on contemporary issues related to the understanding of change leadership and intrapreneurship in medium-sized enterprises.

For this research, the unit of the analysis or case was the enterprise and included commercial and NFP enterprises that have a reputation for innovation, growth and sustainability.

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Selection of cases was made using purposeful sampling (Patton 2002). This selection used replication logic, that is, each case was carefully selected so that it would produce similar results (literal replication) or contrary results (theoretical replication) for predictable reasons (Stokes & Perry 2007; Yin 2009). The replication dimensions referred to the context of the case’s intrapreneurship: nature of the enterprise (commercial or NFP); and strategies of the enterprise relating to, for example, its maturity and competitive challenges. Table 1 shows these details of the five cases.

In turn, the *interviewees* in the cases were selected for their ability to provide valuable information about change leadership and intrapreneurship. Accordingly, there was almost equal representation from both NFP and commercial executives, ranging from middle to senior management. The respondents were senior in their enterprise (for example, CEO, CFO (chief financial officer) or human resource manager) and so produced relevant and quality data which was important for this case research (Yin 2009).

Table 1 Case selection for this research

Case type	Size	Maturity	Industry challenges
Hybrid NFP	Medium	Less than five years	Facing new competition
NFP Entity	Medium	Ten plus years	Experiencing change
NFP Entity	Medium	Less than five years	Structure and policy challenges
Commercial entity	Medium	Ten plus years	Experiencing change
Commercial entity	Medium	Less than five years	Facing new competition

Source: developed for this research.

The 20 interviewees were appropriately between the required sample size in interview research of 15 to 25 (Gaskell 2000). However, the validity, meaningfulness and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size

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(Patton 2002). In brief, the 20 interviews used in this research project was an appropriate number because of the convergence that was carefully sought in the convergent interviews of stage 1, the thoroughness of the procedures in the stage 2 interviews described above, and the detailed data analysis to be carried out in the next section.

Usual methods of ensuring case research quality were implemented like using an interviewer's guide (Carson et al. 2001; Yin 2009), and ethical procedures of the Australian Institute of Business were scrupulously followed.

Next, consider the *data analysis* step of this case research. The transcripts for each interview were examined to gain an overall feel for the data. The manual system commonly used by researchers is the scissor-and-sort technique, and it was used in this research (Yeo 2005). This technique required all data collected to be assembled from which obvious trends and patterns (scissor) were extracted before being grouped (sort) into meaningful clusters to draw conclusions. Next, the researcher scanned the comments in the data for ideas, opinions or thoughts that were raised frequently by the participants. The common ideas were then grouped into themes, which enabled the researcher to interpret the data across all the interviews.

Findings about themes in the data

The previous section discussed the procedures used to identify themes in the data of this research. Next, this section considers the themes that emerged about each of the research issues, from cross-case and cross-cluster analyses. The two clusters were commercial and NFP enterprises, and similar results were found for both clusters.

Research issue 1: How do change leaders develop the mindset (culture) of the enterprise to be consistent with intrapreneurship?

The first research issue examines the culture of the enterprise and how it supports or limits the potential for intrapreneurship. That is, research issue 1 explored the influence that the culture had on the enterprise's ability to be intrapreneurial. Four major themes emerged from the discussion about how change leaders develop the culture of the enterprise.

The first theme that emerged was that an *intrapreneurial culture has a balance between autonomy and support*. Indeed, in both clusters there were claims that the culture was built around this equilibrium of autonomy and support. In both clusters it was evident that the enterprise culture facilitated optimum conditions for autonomous individuals to work in. Additionally, the clusters balanced the autonomy with appropriate support. That is, the enterprise supported creativity with resources (personnel, finance and material) and facilities to innovate the creative ideas. This balance is important to the clusters because it empowers their staff to be free to improve processes or seize opportunity without the bureaucracy that often stifles new ideas in larger enterprises. Furthermore, a reference about support was often linked to managing change, particularly by CEOs. For example, the CEO of Case B (interviewee B1) stated, *'Our operations are built around adequate support ... our competitive advantage is our responsiveness and this comes from change leadership initiatives that equip and support the team'*. Interviewee C1 said, *'Our culture is supportive ... the management team know their people and pre-empt the physical and mental needs of the team'*. In addition, both clusters revealed the need for autonomy in all cases. The terminology used by the respondents varied from 'freedom' to 'self-managed', as well as 'autonomy'. This autonomy did not mitigate the need for support, instead, it complemented it. That is, *'They have the freedom to do their job and think outside the square ... we have a culture that promotes ownership of their role ... they all have the freedom to do their best ... we support them with the resources to innovate their ideas'* (E1).

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This balancing of autonomy with support was managed effectively by the leader's knowledge of both the business and their staff's capacity. Moreover, it was evident across the cases that emotional intelligence was an attribute that determined by the ability to adapt to each of support and autonomy. All the human resource manager respondents (A3, B3, D3 and E3) spoke about the level of emotional intelligence among the senior and line management. For example, three quotations by human resource manager respondents support this finding. *'We don't have a one size fits all solution ... it demands us to know what makes them tick' (E3). 'We all need a degree in human behaviour...change leadership is so dependent on emotional intelligence ... our culture depends on us knowing our team inherently ... some require more support where others thrive on the freedom to achieve' (D3).*

C3 did not disagree and actually supported the theme but only after it was probed for consideration. The role difference of C3 to the other human resource managers is that C3's human resource management responsibilities are outward focused to the clients that are placed in other organisations (Case C is a recruiting firm) whereas A3, B3, D3 and E3 have internal human resource management responsibilities. This role difference of C3 from others explained why probing had to be used to find support for this and later themes. Similarly, A2's CFO role explained why probing was required to find A2's support for this and later themes.

The second theme relating to research issue 1 that emerged was that the *enterprises were both market and intrapreneurial oriented*. That is, the traits associated with a strong intrapreneurial orientation (risk awareness, proactiveness, and receptivity to innovation) and the traits associated with market orientation (customer and competitor orientation), emerged in both clusters during the research. Indeed, both clusters produced evidence that they were oriented towards the satisfaction of customers' needs and wants (market) as well as obsessed towards identifying and exploiting new opportunities (intrapreneurial). That is, the respondents had knowledge about their competitors (names, locations) and the demand for products and services in the areas of operations. Both market and intrapreneurial orientation are important because they inform the enterprises about potential opportunities and give

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insight to the client's needs. For example, B1 stated, '*We know our clients and we shape our business to meet or exceed their expectations*'. The NFP cluster showed a tighter orientation towards the type of opportunity they sought, but their government funding was discussed by NFPs in a similar way to how the commercial cluster discussed new products and/or services. '*We have one guy whose role it is to monitor and engage relevant government departments for funding applications ... the success of winning a tender for funding is no different to when I used to secure million dollar deals in my previous role*' (A1).

The third theme that emerged about research issue 1 was that ***intrapreneurship relates to the whole of the enterprise in medium-sized organisations***. Both clusters supported the need for the employee's mindset to match the culture of the enterprise, thus enabling whole-of-enterprise intrapreneurship. Theme 1.3 emerged around the recruitment of like-minded applicants and the need to develop the mindset of others to make the whole enterprise intrapreneurial. Indeed, when respondents were asked who in the enterprise is responsible for intrapreneurship, there was evidence that the enterprise aimed to recruit/develop all staff to be intrapreneurial. In fact, the recruiting strategies deliberately targeted employees that tended to suit the enterprise culture. For example, respondent B1 said, '*I look at their suitability and how they fit into the organisation... I rely on judgment which tends to be gauged on their performance at interview around the normal conversation... I am also looking for the characteristics that I know do not fit with our culture...like controlling, overbearing and overly confident at interview*'.

The fourth theme that emerged was that the ***culture is underpinned by learning***. Indeed every respondent produced evidence that supported this theme that the culture was underpinned by learning. Theme 1.4 emerged from the discussions relating to the transformation of an individual's mindset or an enterprise's culture, by learning. That is, each case described their competitive advantage as a result of something being learned. For example, when discussion centered on the critical technical skills needed for a particular role, there was a consensus that in most cases a technically skilled staff member could learn other skills to fit with the enterprise. Indeed, it is a potential mismatch of the skills and attitude that

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emphasizes the importance of learning in an intrapreneurial enterprise to maximize opportunity. D2 said *'When I'm recruiting, I normally target professional qualifications (accountants) ... their experience matters...their fit is so important, but when it comes down to selection, I know we can develop most people'*. And B1 said, *'Every new product involves direct and indirect training for our team...this gets us all on board and there is a sense we all own a bit of it...It's not a cliché, but we are a learning organisation'*.

Research issue 2: How do internal structures and policy impact on intrapreneurship in medium-sized enterprises?

Research issue 2 investigates the impact of the enterprise structure and the use of policy. It examines the management structure and use and type of policy in the cases. Two themes emerged from the data about this research issue.

The first theme that emerged was that the *management structure is flat* and individuals are valued and rewarded for their contribution. Theme 2.1 first emerged from data obtained during the discussion about the culture and was confirmed further during the evaluation of the second research issue. Each of the five cases had only three tiers of responsibility. That is, within almost every case examined, from the person performing the task through to senior managers reporting to the CEO, there was only one other tier of management. This flat management structure substantiates the inclusive nature of an intrapreneurial enterprise and supports the autonomy discussed in theme 1.1. All respondents supported this theme 2.1. Furthermore, these tiers were often referred to as levels of responsibility and not levels of authority. For example, B1 said, *'We have a flat management structure and we have worked really hard to develop a reward system that is based on the contribution of the individual ...I want everyone to own their job and the guys between me and the frontline are there to support, not direct them'*.

The second theme that emerged relating to research issue 2 was that the *maturity of an organisation influences the structure and policy that guide its operations to ensure they*

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remain competitive. This theme 2.2 emerged across both clusters from the belief that excessive use of policy and poor management structure impact on the effectiveness of the enterprise. All respondents except C3 made reference to the degree of caution around the use of policy development and its potential to bureaucratise the enterprise. C3 did not disagree about the bureaucratising risk of policy but Case C has a greater need for detailed policy than other respondents because Case C relies on policy to support their services of labour hire (labour hire is heavily regulated by government regulations and so must be quite bureaucratic). Thus C3 said his views about policy risk was restricted to government regulations - *'in our industry policy is very important; we employ people for other companies so I see policy as important to our business ... but it must be relevant and not restrict our business'*.

Importantly, the use of policy was supported by respondents when it facilitates growth. Indeed, as the enterprise matures it is important for the cases to develop policy to help guide the organisation in its operations. That is, the enterprise develops policy to support its growing workforce and to sustain its quality commitment to clients through its products and services. In turn, the policy enables the enterprise to be more efficient and responsive to its client needs. Some of these policies include human resource management policy, purchasing policy, financial delegations, work routines and quality control. For example, D1 said, *'We didn't have a human resource manager for the first nine years ... but as we have grown it became more important to have someone focus on the human resource management aspects permanently'*. As well, as the enterprise grows in size and there are more staff and resources to manage, the need to review management structures becomes more important. For example, Case E had a recent management review that resulted in an additional team function - *'As we have grown, I have restructured our team to better support what I refer to as the troops'* (E1).

Research issue 3: How do change leaders deploy learning strategies in medium-sized enterprises?

Three themes in the data about research issue 3 supplement theme 1.4's finding that learning is part of the intrapreneurial culture, and show learning is influenced by the strategic plan which in turn legitimizes the enterprises learning commitment.

The first theme that emerged about how learning strategies are deployed in medium-sized enterprises was that *learning strategies bridge capability with opportunity* and are developed to meet the skills gap, or can be chosen by an individual to enhance self-worth and individual contribution. The data produced evidence that demonstrated purposeful planning that was intended to support the objectives of the strategic plan. This theme is important to the success of both clusters because it acts as the platform to equip the enterprise with the skills and attitude to grasp new opportunities. Indeed, within both clusters the main purpose for learning is to bridge the enterprise's capability with the needs of its opportunities. For example, B1 said, *'We don't force people to learn...it's encouraged and supported...we have a learning agreement that supports all learning that complements our strategic plan'*. And E1 supported this view about training: *'Our priority for training is to embed new skills to support our growth'*.

The second theme that emerged from the data about research issue 3 is that *learning approaches are varied* and influenced by the priorities of skill deficit, accessibility of the learning institute and the individual. The data revealed evidence of formal, informal, internal and external learning strategies. For example, informal learning by sharing knowledge between peers or attending university or vocational training institutes to acquire new knowledge or skills in a formal learning environment. Indeed, the diversity of the learning approaches is important to enable maximum opportunity for learning and caters to all types of learning capacity in individual staff. That is, both clusters deployed flexible learning strategies that balanced the enterprise's need with the individual's suitability. For example, where skills and knowledge were not available internally, staff either volunteered or were

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nominated to attend external courses to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge. For example, B2 confirmed that she was enrolled in a MBA program that was supported both financially and with time release. Similarly, B1 said, *'The level of support varies according to our needs, the cost of the training and the accessibility'*.

The next theme that emerged from the data about research issue 3 was that *business planning is an important learning strategy*. That is, both clusters directly linked the activity of business planning to intentional and unintentional learning strategies within their enterprise. Theme 3.3 first emerged from the data about research issues 1 and 2 relating to the culture and policy that is supportive of medium-sized intrapreneurial enterprises. That is, business planning is an important learning strategy for both clusters because it discusses and strategizes the organisation's objectives. Indeed, by learning these objectives through participation in business planning, the organisation is better equipped to seize new opportunities with the support of staff. For example, A1 claimed that although they support various learning strategies, *'The most important learning option for us is having our team participates in the development of our business plan'*. Likewise, B3 said, *'Although we value training in general ... our team benefits more from the development sessions we have for our strategic planning ... the weeks and months following those sessions you can see the excitement and belief that we will achieve what we set out to'*.

Research issue 4: How do change leaders embed creativity and innovation into medium-sized enterprises?

The fourth research issue examines how change leaders embed creativity and innovation into medium-sized enterprises. During the data analysis two themes emerged about the research issue.

The first theme that emerged about research issue 4 was that all participants agreed that *creativity and innovation is the core of intrapreneurial enterprises*. Some concepts in theme 4.1 initially emerged from the discussions about research issue 1 relating to the

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intrapreneurial culture, as described above. That is, the balance of autonomy and support (theme 1.1) was directly linked to the environmental conditions conducive to creativity and innovation. But both clusters produced additional evidence that supports the concept that creativity and innovation are at the core of intrapreneurship and so that is theme 4.1.

As the core of intrapreneurship, creativity and innovation are important to both clusters because they enable the enterprise to outwit their competitors with new products or services. For example, B1 said, *'It's our culture ... what we do in the way of creativity and innovation is what we are about'*. Likewise D1 claimed that creativity and innovation are critical: *'Intrapreneurship is just another name for creativity and innovation ... it is what gives us the advantage ... new products are dependent on creative minds and innovative teams that turn the ideas into commercially viable products'*. And D3 said, *'Creativity and innovation is what makes us intrapreneurial ... if you compare us to our competitors this is what we do different'*.

The second theme that emerged from the data about research issue 4 is that ***failure is a learning opportunity*** and the only risk associated with failure is not to learn from it. Theme 4.2 supports the data about research issues 1 (learning underpins the culture) and 3 (learning bridges capability with opportunity). The respondents were aware that adequate support reduces the risk of failure. Although success is what motivates intrapreneurial enterprises, it is important that failure is managed appropriately. Indeed, learning from failure is critical because it mitigates the risk of recurrence. Furthermore, the clusters claimed that failure must be tolerated because fear of failure is prone to limit the willingness to seize an opportunity. For example, A2 said, *'Failure is inevitable occasionally... but we have the attitude that if we create an environment that instils fear because of failure ... we will have a team that is merely reactive'* (A2).

Research issue 5: How do change leaders manage risk in medium-sized enterprises without undermining the nature of intrapreneurship?

The fifth research issue examines how change leaders manage risk in medium-sized enterprises. During the investigation about research issue 5, three themes emerged from the data.

The first theme that emerged from the data about research issue 5 was that ***risk management approaches in medium-sized enterprises are somewhat intuitive***. Theme 5.1 emerged from the data as a concept that risk management was overrated. Indeed, many of the respondents claimed that risk analysis had the potential to ‘slow them down’ (D1). Furthermore, the discussion about risk showed that the respondents understood their enterprise’s strengths and weaknesses. They also demonstrated an extensive knowledge of their market. Indeed, this knowledge underpins their approach to risk management. For example, B1 said that they use their risk management policy for compliance purposes, *‘We have a risk management policy...its required for compliance purpose ... we know our business and we know each other’s strengths and weaknesses...that’s just how we manage risk’*. Furthermore, there was evidence that risk management is embedded in the ‘design phase’ (D1) of creativity and innovation. For example, D1 said the consider risk parallel to planning, *‘Risk management is not something we consciously stop and formally plan ... we just know it ... it is occurs when you know your market and your capacity...the strategy to take hold of an opportunity has incorporated the risk when you are planning’*.

The second theme that emerged from the data about research issue 5 was that ***an enterprise’s reputation and financial risk rate highly***. Theme 5.2 emerged with overwhelming support from both clusters. The CFO respondents (A2, B2, C2, D2 and E2) all instinctively responded with financial risk without any probing. In contrast, most CEO respondents (A1, E1, B1 and D1) first raised their reputation risk as important without probing. However, as the interviews progressed and further discussion occurred, all respondents produced evidence that supported the two risks as having equal importance. Both these risks are important

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because they have the potential to impact negatively on the future viability of the enterprise. For example, B1 claimed they have dissolved a significant partnership for the sake of their reputation, *'We are very sensitive towards actions that pose a risk to our reputation ... we dissolved a partnership that was returning \$1.7m annually because it threatened our reputation ... we expect our investments to produce a return almost immediately or certainly in the short term'*. The presence of documented financial delegations and codes of conduct also support the importance of these two risks.

The third theme that emerged from the data about research issue 5 is that *intrapreneurs take informed risk*. That is, a common theme emerged in both clusters which identified that intrapreneurs work hard at reducing risk through effective planning. Theme 5.3 emerged from both clusters and supports themes 1.2, 3.3 and 5.1. Indeed, most respondents said they easily identify risk because of their market and intrapreneurial orientation. That is, both clusters produced evidence that supported a realistic assessment of their capability that enabled them to quickly make judgment about the viability of new opportunities. This self-awareness and orientation is important because it provides the insight to make an informed judgment about the potential for a new opportunity. Indeed, the discussions and observations identified an informed appreciation about their capacity to seize new opportunities. For example, A1 said, *'It is easy for us to decide if we should create innovative services for our members ... firstly we consider if it adds value ... then we consider if we have the internal skills to succeed ... should we invest in external capacity ... if so how much will it cost?'*

Revised conceptual framework. The findings above allow a revision of the conceptual framework, as summarised in Figure 2. This conceptual framework about intrapreneurship processes in medium-sized enterprises was developed from the initial framework of Figure 1 and the themes identified from respondents during the data analysis of stage 1's convergent interviews and from stage 2's case research. Their comments about the framework confirmed that all respondents believed the revised framework is representative of the intrapreneurial process.

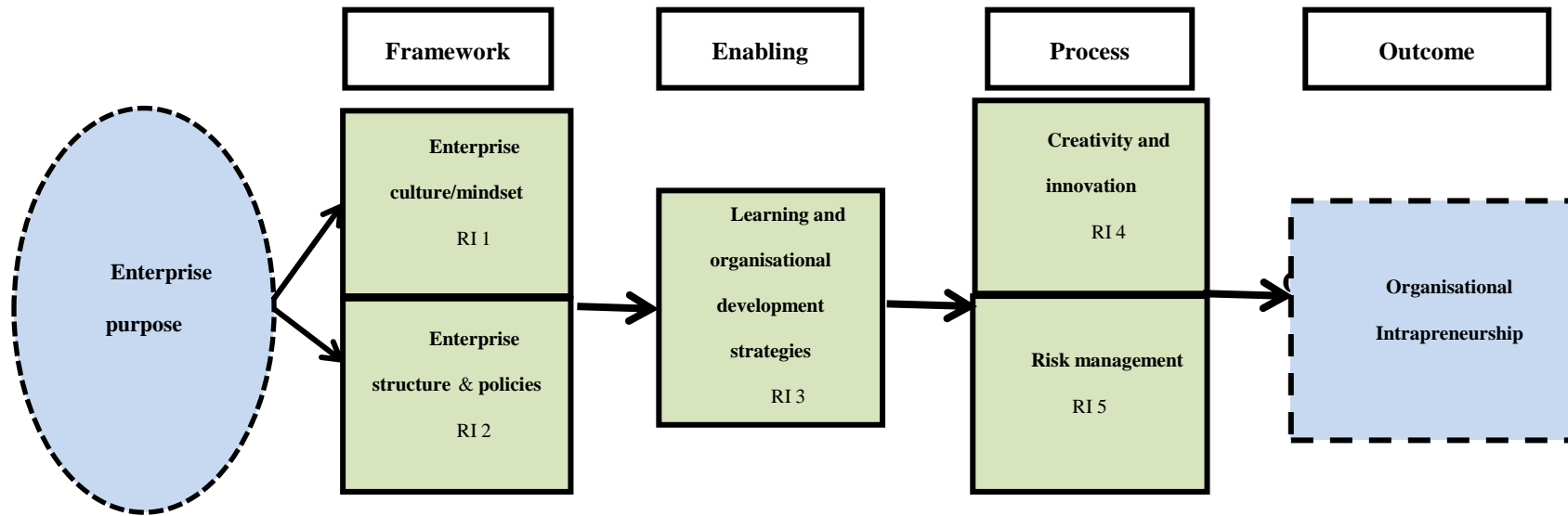
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This revised framework of Figure 2 is different from that of Figure 1 in two ways. Firstly, the five key elements are now illustrated in green shading, whereas the two variables of enterprise purpose and organisational intrapreneurship are in light blue shading and represented by dashes. The green represents the actions that influence intrapreneurship while the blue represents the influences that affect it. Secondly, the findings from the research are found now under the headings of the five elements directly beneath the framework.

In summary, the revised conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 2 now links the findings to the model. It has more relevant detail that emphasizes actions linked to the intrapreneurial processes that were identified during the case research.

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Figure 2 Final conceptual framework



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Figure 2 (cont.)

Findings and their link to the framework

RI 1 Culture/mindset	RI 2 Structure and policy	RI 3 Learning strategies
Finding 1: balanced with autonomy and support	Finding 5: flat management structure	Finding 7: bridges capability with opportunity
Finding 2: market and intrapreneurial oriented	Finding 6: policy developed as enterprise matures	Finding 8: learning approaches are varied
Finding 3: enterprise culture fits staff mindset		Finding 9: business planning is critical
Finding 4: culture is underpinned by learning		
RI 4 Creativity and innovation	RI 5 Risk management	
Finding 10: the core of intrapreneurship	Finding 12: is somewhat intuitive	
Finding11: failure is tolerated	Finding13: reputation and finance are key risks	
	Finding14: intrapreneurs are risk informed	

Note: the green shaded boxes contain the five key elements (that is, the research issues); the blue shaded boxes are the variable elements. In more detail, the green represents the actions that influence intrapreneurship while the blue represents the influences that affect it. The table links the findings to the five research issues.

Source: developed for this research.

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Discussion

Conclusions about the research problem. This section synthesises the research's findings about the research issues into a solution to the research problem about *how change leaders manage intrapreneurship in medium-sized enterprises*. The research provided a new, in-depth understanding of the whole picture of the answer to that research problem – it 'fleshes-out' the picture only glimpsed in the extant literature. Figure 2 summarises this discussion. It highlights how the elements of intrapreneurship interrelate; that is, how the enterprise culture and structure, learning strategies, creativity and innovation, and risk management affect the process of intrapreneurship in medium-sized enterprise.

In more detail, Figure 2 commences with an understanding of the enterprise purpose which contextualizes the operating environment of the enterprise. Firstly, it establishes the purpose of the enterprise's existence and/or reinvention. That is, who does the enterprise target, what products and services does it deliver, and what resources are required to deliver those products and services. Once that enterprise purpose is determined, a *Framework* is set up. A culture that facilitates the needs of the enterprise is established. In intrapreneurial medium-sized enterprises the culture has a balance of autonomy and support. This balance encourages creativity through autonomy and enables innovation through adequate support (Slevin & Covin 1999). Furthermore, in medium-sized enterprises, the culture promotes inclusion and thus leads to whole-of-enterprise intrapreneurship. To support the whole-of-enterprise intrapreneurship, the culture is embedded with the two orientations, that is, in medium-sized enterprises there is a prerequisite for both a strong intrapreneurial and market orientation (Baker & Sinkula 2009). This learning about customers and markets establishes the need for intrapreneurial enterprises to be learning organisations. Indeed, the culture in medium-sized enterprises must be underpinned by learning (Lau et al. 2010).

Next in the Framework of Figure 2 is the selection of appropriate supporting structure and policy. In medium-sized enterprises the management structure is flat and individuals are

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valued and rewarded for their contribution. Indeed, an organisation with minimal hierarchical levels and open communications channels is positively related to organisational performance and conducive to intrapreneurial practice (Kuratko & Hodgetts 2007). As a medium-sized enterprise matures, it develops relevant policy to help guide the organisation in its operations, to support the intrapreneurial process.

Once the structure and policy is confirmed, and the framework for a medium-sized intrapreneurial enterprise is established, the *Enabling* element of intrapreneurship, that is, learning strategies are developed. Both individual and organisational learning approaches are necessary to be competitive in a knowledge economy (Franco & Haase 2009). In medium-sized enterprises, learning strategies connect the enterprise's capabilities with the requirements of new ventures. These learning strategies are varied and can be informal or formal and influenced by the priority of skills needed to seize the new opportunity. Within medium-sized enterprises, business planning is an important learning strategy that supports the process of intrapreneurship. The inclusive nature of medium-sized enterprises creates the learning platform and facilitates the exchange of relevant knowledge through business planning. In brief, for organisations this size, the learning outcome and collaboration among enterprise managers and workers contribute to the intrapreneurial process in medium-sized enterprises.

At the core of the intrapreneurship *Process* is creativity and innovation. In medium-sized enterprises, change leaders must develop capacity to influence without the use of formal power (Hill 2009). That is, leaders must be equipped with the emotional intelligence to comprehend their surroundings whilst focusing on achieving the venture objectives. In medium-sized enterprises, the fear of failure is minimized and the focus remains on strategies to avoid failure and the willingness to learn from it. In turn, intrapreneurs apply strategies to reduce failure through risk management. In medium-sized enterprises, the key risks are reputation and financial investment. The impact of a negative reputation has significant repercussions for medium-sized enterprises. Indeed, reputational risk will inevitably impact on financial investment, thus the two risks must be managed closely by intrapreneurs in

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medium-sized enterprises. To ensure the profitability and sustainability of the enterprise the intrapreneur must take informed risk only. In medium-sized enterprises the market and intrapreneurial orientations inform them of potential risk, thus enabling risk management to be somewhat intuitive. This intuition complements the responsiveness that competitive enterprises must have when seizing new opportunities, that is, it gives the enterprise the capacity to seize new opportunity.

The *Outcome* of all these processes is an enterprise's development of mature intrapreneurship.

Implications. Now consider the implications of this research for practice. For business practitioners, the research focuses on the emphasis placed on a culture that is inclusive and has the right balance of freedom and support to sustain creativity and innovation. It also draws the attention to the learning strategies that enable creativity and innovation. Furthermore, the research identifies the need for both market and intrapreneurial orientations so that intrapreneurs can make informed decisions quickly about the enterprise's risk exposure.

Secondly, the final framework can help leaders of medium-sized businesses to look for critical elements in their business processes, when considering start up or reinvention. Most respondents indicated that the revised theoretical framework would be particularly helpful for businesses to think about elements and the processes that support intrapreneurship. Moreover, elements such as the enterprise culture, structure and policy, learning strategies, creativity and innovation, and risk management have been broken down in it.

In turn, this research has implications for management development programs. For example, a professional development program could incorporate the findings of this research about intrapreneurship to assist managers in the development of a whole-of-enterprise approach to intrapreneurship in medium-sized enterprises. This training in intrapreneurship could also be

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combined with a course on change leadership skills, which, in turn, could illustrate the managers' skills that may be necessary for the pending change.

Limitations and implications for further research. A limitation of case research is that it might lead to overly complex theories (Eisenhardt 1989). The use and development of prior theory and five research issues were used to overcome this complexity (Yin 2009). Although case research has also been criticized for its logistical and operational problems (Eisenhardt 1989), the use of replication logic for the case selection and the development of an interviewer's guide addressed these criticisms. Other criticisms of the case methodology related to external validity, research rigor and the ability to generalise were addressed, that is, the development of clear guidelines for the management of case study validity and reliability by the researcher ensured that the criticisms were mitigated (Stokes & Perry 2007). In brief, careful planning and execution of case research ensured that its strengths were enhanced and its weaknesses were diminished (Stokes & Perry 2007; Yin 2009).

Incidentally, this research is delimited to the data collected from cases in Australia. Further empirical evidence incorporating international cases would extend the scope of this research. Furthermore, this research is limited to *analytic* generalisation (Yin 2009); that is, the case research findings have been fitted into the extant theory. But quantitative research such as surveys and large scale interviews could be done to further extend the research for statistical generalisation. For example, a quantitative study on medium-size enterprises that invests in learning versus those enterprises that do not invest, may assist the findings that learning strategies are critical to intrapreneurship. Furthermore, the whole-of-enterprise approach is medium-sized enterprises was found to be manageable in this research because of the size of the organisations. Further research on larger and smaller clusters could empirically test the processes and their relevance in different sized enterprises through more qualitative research.

Conclusion

In summary, this research developed and investigated five research issues. The solution of the research problem was presented, and implications for practice were suggested. And limitations and suggestions for future research were presented.

In conclusion, this research investigated how change leaders manage intrapreneurship in medium-sized enterprises. The key finding that adds to the literature is that a whole-of-enterprise approach to intrapreneurship is needed in medium-sized enterprises. This approach in medium-sized enterprises is manageable because of the organisations' flat structure and size. Whole-of-enterprise intrapreneurship is linked to the practices that differ somewhat from those presented in the literature, in particular, its intuitive approach to risk management, its approach to protecting the enterprise's reputations, its inclusive business planning, and its absence of fear from failure.

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