



## The Deliberate Creative Podcast with Amy Climer: Transcript for Episode #097: Intrapreneurship with Dr. Irena Yashin-Shaw

July 5, 2018

**Amy Climer:** Welcome to The Deliberate Creative podcast Episode 97. In today's episode I am talking with Dr. Irena Yashin-Shaw about intrapreneurs. Before we get into that, I wanted to tell you about what is happening in [Episode 100](#). I cannot believe we are almost there, and I am so excited. I wanted to do something a little bit different in [Episode 100](#). What I am doing is I am interviewing listeners to find out what have you learned. How have you taken what you have learned on The Deliberate Creative podcast and applied it in your work or in your life? If you have a story to share, whether it was a success or a failure, I would love to hear from you.

You can learn more about this at [www.climerconsulting.com/100](http://www.climerconsulting.com/100). If you head over there what you will find is a phone number where you can call me and leave a message. It goes directly to a voicemail, you will get to leave a message. Tell me a bit of what have you learned, what have you applied, what happened? Was it a success? Was it a failure? We definitely like to hear about failures around here. In fact, if you listen to [Episode 90](#) and [93](#), I talk about failures that I have had and just the whole concept about learning from failures. They are a great way to learn and when we share them, it helps other people not make the same mistakes we have. It also gives them some motivation and some encouragement to maybe try something because if they fail, that is okay. Other people have as well.

I want to hear about your successes and failures around creativity and implementing what you have learned. Go to [www.climerconsulting.com/100](http://www.climerconsulting.com/100) and leave me a message. I am hoping to feature a few different people on that episode. I look forward to hearing from you.

Today, we are talking about intrapreneurs. Intrapreneurs are problem solvers who are really being recognized as the driving force behind innovation in organizations. Dr. Irena Yashin-Shaw is leading the charge in this new way of working. She has a new book out where she shares some cutting-edge concepts that really will help you learn how to be an intrapreneur and how

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to create a culture of creativity and intrapreneurialism within your organization. If you are interested in innovation within an organization, I think you will find this conversation valuable. Here is Dr. Irena Yashin-Shaw.

Irena, welcome to The Deliberate Creative podcast. Thank you so much for being on the show.

**Irena Yashin-Shaw:** My pleasure. I have been looking forward to it, Amy. Thank you.

**Amy Climer:** Of course. Can you start off and tell us a bit of who you are and what you do?

**Irena Yashin-Shaw:** Certainly. I am Dr. Irena Yashin-Shaw hailing all the way from Brisbane, Australia. I am an innovation expert dedicated to creating intrapreneurs. When people ask me who I am and what I do, I say that I think of myself as a liberator. In other words, I facilitate the liberation of innovation and creativity and leadership within organizations. The way that I do that is through speaking and mentoring and writing and training. In a nutshell, that would be what it is.

**Amy Climer:** Excellent! You mentioned intrapreneurs. Let's talk a little bit about that. What is an intrapreneur?

### What is an Intrapreneur? [04:15]

**Irena Yashin-Shaw:** Good question because it is a relatively new-ish term and a lot of people are not familiar with it. They often think that I have said it incorrectly. They go, "Oh, you mean an entrepreneur?" I say, "No, no, an intrapreneur." An intrapreneur is someone literally who thinks and acts and behaves like an entrepreneur, but while they are working inside a large organization or any organization. These are the people who are the opportunity finders and the problem solvers and the innovation drivers inside any organization. They are the human face of innovation. In a nutshell, that would be an intrapreneur.

**Amy Climer:** You kind of already mentioned this a little bit, but I was going to ask you why would someone want to be an intrapreneur or why would an organization want their employees to be intrapreneur-ish? What is the motivation there?

**Irena Yashin-Shaw:** The first part of that question, why would anyone want to be an intrapreneur? The world of work is changing these days and being an intrapreneur and being known as an intrapreneur is really the best career move there could possibly be. If someone has

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a reputation as an intrapreneur, it will mean that they will be highly sought after. There is this global talent shortage at the moment that we hear so much about and being an intrapreneur and being known to be an intrapreneur makes you an irresistible employee. That would be one reason.

Another reason would be because, especially amongst millennials, a lot of millennials at some stage or another -- the research tells us -- would like to have a go at being an entrepreneur. At some stage, I read some research recently that was actually done in the States that said about 67% of millennials would like to have a business at some stage in their career. Another way of looking at this is that if you want to be an entrepreneur, learn the skills of entrepreneurialism by being an intrapreneur so that you actually know what to do when you strike out on your own.

I just recently wrote a blog post about how intrapreneurialism is the new generic skill. I would say that that would be the third reason. It is that cluster of skills that enables us to drive innovation. I think that that cluster of skills that enables us to be innovators, that intrapreneurs cultivate are really essential in the new world of work. They are as essential as being digitally literate and being good communicators. It is that core set of skills that people can take with them to any job that they go to. That would be why should someone want to be an intrapreneur.

In terms of why should an organization care; just logically, Amy, if an organization has a critical mass of intrapreneurs, they are going to do better. They are going to be able to drive innovation, they will be more likely to stay relevant, they will have that sort of energy within their ranks that will help them to come up with new ways of doing things. Having a critical mass of employees like that is really essential for any organization that is wanting to be future ready.

**Amy Climer:** That makes perfect sense. Seems like every organization will want to develop their employees to be intrapreneurs.

**Irena Yashin-Shaw:** Absolutely.

**Amy Climer:** You mentioned creativity and innovation and, of course, we both focus a lot on that. Can you talk a little bit about how might intrapreneurialism feed creativity and help organizations be more innovative?



## How Intrapreneurialism Can Help Organizations Be More Innovative [08:11]

**Irena Yashin-Shaw:** If I can just flip that a little bit, rather than intrapreneurialism feeding creativity, in fact, I believe that it is creativity that feeds intrapreneurialism. Creativity is the raw materials. Is that okay? Does that make sense?

**Amy Climer:** Oh yeah.

**Irena Yashin-Shaw:** It is the creativity that starts people thinking differently and then being intrapreneurial is what gives that creativity purpose and a vehicle and a way of manifesting through actions. Intrapreneurs start with some different thinking because they challenge the norm. Being an intrapreneur means that you do not accept things the way they are. By challenging the norm that in many ways, is using creative thinking in order to do things differently.

I think of intrapreneurs as dreamers who do. There is a wonderful quote that “the world needs dreamers and the world needs doers, but above all, the world needs dreamers who do.” Just off the top of my head I cannot remember who said that, but it is a wonderful quote. Dreaming is the creativity part of it and doing is the innovation part of it. I feel that it is intrapreneurs who are that translation between creativity and innovative outcomes.

**Amy Climer:** I am glad you said it that way because I think about clients that I have worked with and team members who will sometimes push back and say, “Why should we be creative?” Because they think of creativity as sort of fluffy. That it does not connect to the purpose of the organization. When they can see how that creativity feeds into the purpose, and in this case using this tool of intrapreneurialism then okay, now it is worthwhile to be creative, to dream, because the doing part is what matters.

**Irena Yashin-Shaw:** Yes. I really agree with what you have just said about people have this notion, this misguided impression about creativity being a bit fluffy. They think it is about painting and doing drama or that sort of thing that is associated with the arts. But really creativity, as you know so well, is a very important fundamental skill for good workplace performance.

I have a way of -- if I can use the word -- concretizing that process. The most fundamental tool for creativity that I often refer to in my work within organizations is called BODS. I say to people let's be creative BODS. It is an acronym. BODS stands for B for Better, O for Other, D for

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Different and S for Simple. If people ask themselves these really basic questions; B - how can I do this better? If they ask themselves these questions about everything that they do in their workplace, imagine the kind of productivity this would unleash.

B - How can I do this better?

O - How have other people solved this problem?

D - What will I see if I looked at this from a different perspective?

S - How can I simplify this? Because simple is the news smart.

When I share that very simple little heuristic with people, it suddenly takes creativity out of the realm of woo-woo into the realm of I can do this. I can make this part of my everyday thinking. It is that kind of thinking that drives intrapreneurialism.

**Amy Climer:** I love that. BODS. Better, Other, Different, Simple. That is brilliant. Just those four questions could lead to zillions of ideas.

**Irena Yashin-Shaw:** Exactly. Honestly, people have just taken this idea and run with it. I have done lots of innovation training with teams and they come up with their BODS charters and they make interesting pictures that represent each of the letters of the acronym and put them up around their workplaces to remind them to be creative BODS. I love seeing people unleash their creativity in how they actually use their creative BODS concepts.

**Amy Climer:** That is awesome. I love it. Irena, in your book you talk about the essential ingredients for intrapreneurialism. Can you go into that little bit?

### Three Practices to Foster Intrapreneurialism [12:57]

**Irena Yashin-Shaw:** For this, I might have to ask your listeners to engage their visual thinking for a moment and think of a Venn diagram with three circles in each section. Because that is the best way to talk about the essential ingredients. I have got three key drivers and then three key practices. The three key drivers, which are the circles of the Venn, are polemics, mechanics and dynamics. If I could explain that for a moment.

#### Polemics

Polemics is the ancient art of argumentation. It is a very old word and in a sense, it means to debate, it means to interrogate the norm, it means to challenge the status quo. That is the first driver. We need to be prepared to not accept business as usual thinking and say what is wrong



with this? How can we make it better? Why are we accepting this course of action? Just because we have always done something this way does not mean we need to continue doing this way. That is the first driver - polemics.

### Mechanics

The second driver is the notion of mechanics, which is all of the systems and the tools and the processes that go towards determining our level of performance. How can we change the system inside of which we work so that we can actually do differently? Not just think differently, but actually do differently.

### Dynamics

The third one is dynamics, which is around how we interact with other people. These are all about the interactions that we have with others that influence others. It is the people element of it. How do we bring other people on board with change and how do we collaborate with others in order to leverage the initiatives that we want to implement within the workplace? That is the three key drivers. Then in my Venn, I talk about the intersections between those drivers. The first one is the intersection between polemics and mechanics, which is if we are thinking differently and we are looking to our environment to change how we do things, then we have got the opportunity for running pilots. I actually refer to it as conducting an internal startup within the organization, which is really just simply a pilot project. It is just a small piece of work that people can identify needs to be done. Maybe they have identified a process that is taking too much time or there is something that is using up resources that is inefficient. Find a small piece of work and treat it like a startup and use it like a pilot project.

The thing about that, though, is that it needs to have, built in to the DNA of that little pilot project, the opportunity to scale up if it is successfully negotiated. The first practice is to create an internal start-up and then the second practice is scalability. How can we iterate and then disseminate that project or that pilot across the organization to have wider influence? I have actually seen some wonderful tiny projects that have scaled up right across the entire organization and literally changed the way the organization has done a particular practice, just from someone starting with a tiny little project. That can be very influential.

The third practice is about creating a future focused vision. Once people gain their confidence and they have been able to identify a process by which they can change and they become confident with it, then they start looking around for other opportunities to innovate and to use the intrapreneurialism skills to drive further change. Then they begin to see a vision of the future that they can contribute to and that they can shape. The third practice is having that

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future focused vision. Those are the three key drivers and the three key practices that I talk about when I talk about my intrapreneurialist framework.

**Amy Climer:** Wow! That makes so much sense. I love that. What have you found in working with organizations and teams that you work with, what are the barriers to intrapreneurialism? Are there certain things that stand out that get in the way?

### **Barriers That Prevent Intrapreneurialism [17:46]**

**Irena Yashin-Shaw:** Yes. Barriers can often be categorized into two overarching areas. Barriers can be both coming from people or they might come from the system -- the actual environment. If I think about typical sorts of people barriers, they would be things like being afraid to take a risk. That is probably not unusual for you to hear that one either. It could even be that people are a bit cynical about change. They might say, "Oh, we've seen this all before and it's never come to anything," or that they have had so much change that they are actually, literally, change-fatigued and they just do not want to know about any further intrapreneurial initiatives. The other common barrier is a lack of leadership in this area. A lack of vision and a lack of support from the various senior members of the organization for this kind of thinking. Those are some of the typical people barriers that I see very often.

Then the systemic sorts of barriers are the ones that are along the lines of very rigid hierarchies. The organization has got extremely set-in-concrete type layers that are hard to transcend and negotiate or that there is a lot of micromanagement going on or that there are silos so the organization is not able to share resources across different areas.

I work a lot in government and one of the big barriers is just simply bureaucratic procedures. Lots of bureaucracy. Lots of legacy systems. A lot of "this is how we've always done it and this is the process that we have got and this is the technology that we're using" and not really entertaining the fact that there is this new technology there that can help us do things a lot better and a lot faster. But there are so many layers to negotiate that sometimes people just lose energy. Even really dedicated intrapreneurs, they just get exhausted from trying to fight the bureaucracy. Those are some of the typical barriers that I see, especially, working in government. But most large organizations such as government, private sector, corporate, they all have similar barriers.

**Amy Climer:** Oh yeah, I have seen that. I love that you use that term legacy systems or legacy procedures and processes. I see that so often where, "Well, this is just how we do it." I'm like,

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“You’ve been doing it the same way for 20 years, maybe it’s worth looking at it again.” Getting people to think about that.

**Irena Yashin-Shaw:** Yes, I totally agree. Although, to be perfectly honest, I think that there is now a realization, an awakening within virtually every organization that wants to remain relevant that they have to look at how they are doing things. It does not make any sense in the world that is changing so quickly to just go, “Well, we don’t really want to change. We’ll just stay the way we are.” I honestly cannot think of any organization that would say that and be proud of it. “Yes, we’ve been doing this the way we’ve always done it and we’re just going to keep doing the same way for the next 20 years.” Because I think there really is a realization that that kind of thinking is just going to put them out of business and they are just going to be irrelevant

**Amy Climer:** Right. It is like, “Good luck with that.”

**Irena Yashin-Shaw:** We are definitely in the age where people are recognizing that things are not going to slow down. Change is endemic, change is exponential, and it is not going to stop. We are on that trajectory, we are on that pathway and any organization that does not come on board, I think, very clearly realizes that that is the death nail for them. If they want to be relevant into the future, they are going to have to change. I think we are in a really great space. We are very fortunate to work in this sort of area at the moment, Amy.

**Amy Climer:** I would agree. I do not know if it is the same in Australia, but here in the U.S. there are a number of companies who have been around for, literally, a century, whose stores are closing and there are bets about when the entire company is going to fold. It is not a matter of if, it is a matter of when because they have not been willing to innovate and change. What is sad is that in their history, they were, actually, a very innovative company, but they got complacent.

**Irena Yashin-Shaw:** Yes. That is what I alluded to before that if the senior leadership is not on board with thinking differently and being prepared to drive that change, then the company is in trouble. Absolutely. It is a given today that if organizations are not constantly looking for ways to do BODS – what I talked about before – Better, Other, Different, Simple, then they are literally dead in the water. The people who will help them to shape the company for the future and to be future-ready are the intrapreneurs. It keeps coming back to this fundamental notion of finding intrapreneurs, nurturing them, and then giving them some latitude to bring their talent to actually benefit the organization.



**Amy Climer:** Absolutely. Irena, I am wondering if you can share with us a story about an organization that you worked with that started adopting more of an intrapreneurial approach. What happened? What changes did they go through?

### **An Example of an Organization Who Adopted Intrapreneurialism [23:53]**

**Irena Yashin-Shaw:** In my book, I have got a number of case studies that are peppered all the way through that illustrate the models. But one organization that I would say has been quite remarkable in the way that they have been able to transcend legacy systems and business as usual thinking is, actually, one of the largest government departments in my state. As I mentioned before, I do a lot of work in government. This particular department is, actually, one of the largest ones in the state and they have got a wonderful director general who just is so committed to nurturing people and educating people and giving them opportunity to innovate.

They have literally managed to steer the Titanic on a postage stamp. If you think about how long it would take for a government department with thousands of employees to change culture, this organization has done it within a relatively short time in a couple of years. Actually, I can say this because at the moment, they are my largest client. The key driver for this has been the important messages that have come from the very senior leadership and the support that has been really visible.

Things like the senior leadership have cascaded a series of messages down through the organization. One of the deputy director generals drives this. She is the innovation champion for the organization. She literally puts out these messages that say things like -- if I can just refer to my book here, Amy -- she says, "Intrapreneurialism and innovation are professional skills relevant to a 21st century workforce in the same way that customer services and project management are professional skills." This is her speaking. I quote her in my book.

"They are core skills so we will train you up in this new way of working by giving you the skills, the processes, the permission and the support to take your ideas from inception to fruition. We will work with the willing. Anyone who is interested can put their hand up to be trained, equipped and supported in their efforts no matter where they are or what role they play in the organization. We will provide you with the opportunity to have the headspace so you can think differently and use your creativity to solve all the difficult issues that face us in the complex world. We want you to take ownership of your ideas and we will empower you to bring them to life." I am quoting her because I interviewed her for my book.



“We have a talented and skilled workforce. You are capable of innovation. So we want to give you a voice, a profile, the opportunity to amplify and formalize what you have already proven that you can do. We want you to tap into the latent innovation capacity within the organization and we want to innovate in areas that you know best because you are the best person to know how to do it better.” I can go on, you will have to get my book. It is on page 190. I can go on, because I interviewed her and she just articulated it so beautifully that I have quoted her all the way through. I can go on for a little bit longer if we have got time?

**Amy Climer:** I think we have the idea. Actually, when I was listening to you I thought to myself, “Oh, she is somebody I would want to work with or work for.” If I was looking for a company to be an employee of, that is the kind of company that I would want to work for. I would imagine many people who see themselves as entrepreneurial and are thinking of this concept of intrapreneurialism and how can I be creative within an organization? That is really an amazing rally cry.

**Irena Yashin-Shaw:** It is and literally, this massive government department has changed their culture within a short space of time because these messages are not just rhetoric. People within the organization at all layers are hearing these sorts of messages, but they are also being given the opportunity to do what is being advocated.

In fact, I have been working in different parts of the organization doing my innovative leader mentoring program. We take groups of people through, we teach them how to be innovators, they undertake a project of some sort. It was so interesting because, literally, within a three month period, some of the most intractable problems that the organizations have been facing over years were solved during a really short space of time.

One typical issue that often happens in Australia because of our vastness is that very remote and regional areas have difficulty staffing their offices. People in far north Queensland, people think, “I do not want to go. I cannot uproot the kids from school and go and work in the remotest region of the country because it would be such an upheaval to my family.” One of the people in my last mentoring program came up with a brilliant solution to staffing regional offices and they have already implemented it. All within the space of a few months. It was a different kind of thinking that led to the solution of that problem.

Now I have noticed that other government departments are adopting the same approach. Because it was so beautiful and so elegant that other government departments went, “Ah, that’s



how we solve that problem.” When you are onto an idea whose time has come, you just know because the ripples go out very quickly. That was one example.

In another area, I have done an intrapreneurial mentoring program which has literally brought back to the organization over a million dollars of reclaimed lost productivity in a really short space of time. It is about leaders really walking their talk and giving out these messages that are empowering their workforce and then actually supporting them into doing it.

The flipside of this is that you have organizations that talk about this sort of thing, go, “Oh yes, we want our workforce to be entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial. We want you to be innovative and we want to be future ready,” and then they do nothing to support them on that journey. It is just talk. Like, “Yes, we’ve ticked that box, we’ve done our innovation strategy and here we go, we can make it look beautiful and we will design it up so there is our innovation strategy,” but then they do not fund people to go on courses or they do not support them with their initiatives. They haul them over the coals if something goes wrong. What are the messages that they are sending out about that then?

When there is alignment with the rhetoric and the reality of how they support it, that is when an organization really is able to be transformative in its culture and be future-ready.

**Amy Climer:** Absolutely. That is exactly what I have seen as well. Irena, one of the things I like to do at the end of every episode is to give listeners a weekly challenge. Something where they can take what they have heard from you and start applying it right away within the next week or so. I am wondering what might be a weekly challenge you would give listeners to help them become more of an intrapreneur in their work.

### Weekly Challenge [31:59]

**Irena Yashin-Shaw:** I think we have already talked about one approach, and that is using the BODS framework. This would be my challenge for your listeners. Look around your workplace and find one thing that is not working. This is a very small scale version of how we can begin to do differently. One thing that is not working in your environment. People literally could probably point to a hundred, but there is something that is either a process that takes too much time or causes frustration or a blocked communication channel or feedback from a client that was less than satisfactory. All of these things that are not working well are all potential opportunities.



I teach people to start small. One small thing that you can identify is an opportunity, an innovation opportunity that you can bring your intrapreneurial talent to. And then keep it small. Scale it right down before you think about going big and then apply the BODS thinking. Look at that one issue and go, “How can I do it better? How have other people looked at this issue? How could a different perspective give me insights into how to solve this? Can I make this simple?” I would say that that is a great place to start. Find one small challenge and apply BODS to it and see where you go with it. Then if it works, refine it, iterate it, scale it up.

**Amy Climer:** Awesome! I love it. That is great. Using BODS. I am totally going to do that. Irena, if people want to find you, where would they find you?

**Irena Yashin-Shaw:** My website is probably the best place to start. It is [www.drirenayashinshaw.com](http://www.drirenayashinshaw.com). On my website are all of my blogs and you can buy my book from there. You can also get my books from Amazon, but you can also get them from my website. I have a distributor in Melbourne who will post them to any part of the world as need be. Just as a matter of interest, my latest book is called [Intrapreneur: How leaders ignite innovation, break bureaucracy and catalyse change](#). You can see that reflected in the conversation that we have just had. My previous book was called [Leading in the Innovation Age](#). That has been out for about 18 months now. They are both available from my website.

Other than that, I would love for your listeners to reach out and connect with me on LinkedIn. That is just Dr. Irena Yashin-Shaw. You can sign up for my fortnightly blogs. That will put you onto my mailing list and be part of my community. There are a number of ways that I could connect with people who want to reach out to me and I am very happy to do that.

**Amy Climer:** Excellent! Thank you. I will put all of those links in the shownotes so listeners can go there if they need to find them. I will say to those of you listening, I have read Irena’s book and it is excellent. The intrapreneurialism book. I highly recommend it. It is an easy read, great stories, concrete, thoughtful, well thought out intellectual property. It is really great.

**Irena Yashin-Shaw:** Thank you for that, Amy. Thank you very much.

**Amy Climer:** Irena, thank you so much for being on The Deliberate Creative podcast. It was really great to have you here today.

**Irena Yashin-Shaw:** My pleasure. What a joy! Thank you.



**Amy Climer:** Thank you, Irena, for being on The Deliberate Creative podcast. It is great to have you here. You can access the shownotes at [www.climerconsulting.com/097](http://www.climerconsulting.com/097). If you go there, you will find Irena's website as well as a link to her book. I highly recommend checking out her book if you are interested in digging deeper into being an intrapreneur or intrapreneurialism and how to foster that within your organization. Her writing is clear, easy to understand and she has some great depth in her book. Definitely check it out and you will also find the link to her website where you can reach out to her if you want to work with her.

Irena, thank you for joining us all the way from Australia. So great to have you on the show. Listeners, please also go to [www.climerconsulting.com/100](http://www.climerconsulting.com/100) if you want to share some insights that you learned and be featured on Episode 100. Thank you so much for being a part of the podcast and for listening. Love seeing your insights and getting your emails. Thank you for the comments you all leave on the shownotes. It is great to have you part of this community and thank you for continuing to make creativity more prominent part of our world.

Have a wonderful creative week everyone. I will see you next time. Bye.