



Everyone's an Entrepreneur

Encouraging individuals to adopt an entrepreneurial attitude can have a significant impact on a business. That's according to Professor Chris Roebuck, an expert on improving organisational performance through people.

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As a CEO, how can you get the competitive edge? When many organisations are fighting over smaller markets, markets with less revenue or less growth potential due to the downturn, what can you do? One option is to use the entrepreneur's profit-hunting instincts. The entrepreneurial attitude to business is more likely to deliver success because, in these troubled and fast-changing times, the corporate assumptions around customer loyalty or stability often don't work as well as the entrepreneur's tactics of finding new ways of doing things or gaps in the market.

The problem is that creating an entrepreneurial approach in your organisation isn't easy. In the corporate world many at senior level prefer those at lower level levels to be managers more than leaders despite their public statements. What's the difference? Simply that managers deliver what they are told and manage resources effectively. Leaders, meanwhile, inspire, question the status quo, look for new ways of doing things, create vision and take more risks. These leadership behaviours may be no problem at board level but they worry some senior management teams when seen at junior level: too much thought, risk taking and questioning of the status quo is the stuff of nightmares.

On the other side, while those with profit and loss responsibility or senior management are encouraged to be entrepreneurial it's often not encouraged in middle and junior management. It's seen as being 'risky' and potentially disruptive internally. This might seem to create a quieter world for senior managers by reducing the 'bright ideas' coming up from lower down but it leaves them in the dark about real opportunities to improve customer service, efficiency, innovation and staff performance.

As organisations grow from their SME roots into a larger more corporate structure there is an assumption that the skills of the entrepreneur must be superseded by the skills of the corporate manager and leader. This is where the 'enterprise' becomes an 'organisation'. But this misses the point. Why not combine the best of both, taking up a new paradigm in leadership thinking to create further competitive advantage – the entrepreneurial leader?

Multiplier effect

Why is the entrepreneurial leader so valuable? They are good leaders but they also have stronger business skills and understanding, putting profit seeking, managing change, innovation and looking for market disruptive ideas to the forefront. Thus the normal leader's vision, inspiring motivation of staff, understanding of the current organisation, desire to make it more efficient is added to by the entrepreneur's capability to not only make the present world better but find a new world that's better still. Also, if the leader behaves in this way then most of their team will do the same – it's a positive multiplier effect that can ripple across your organisation inspiring all.

This more entrepreneurial attitude is not a threat to the organisation's stability, structure or safety if aligned in the right way by top management. If focussed on the achievement of the organisation's

vision, aligned to key deliverables and underpinned by its values then it has the capability to transform performance both now and in the future. Some current leaders may not have the capability to take on this more entrepreneurial role but most, if already good leaders, will have. Their personal drive will encourage them to build the skills they need, especially if the organisation supports such development. This is about giving them the tools and information to be more entrepreneurial – it's not a mystical revelation, it's just as much a process that can be learned as many other things. It's about helping them look for the 'gaps' in the system, market or environment and then exploiting them. This should happen at both strategic and operational levels to really make a difference.

To be successful these should be the guiding drivers for everyone in the organisation, led by focussed entrepreneurial leaders at all levels. Once you have created a culture in the organisation where this behaviour can flourish, where people take the initiative and give feedback, look for innovation, find cost efficiencies and increase profit, and look for gaps in the market that might provide new revenue or disrupt competitors, then you will naturally have an advantage. This behaviour should not be the preserve of just senior management – everyone you have should be a budding entrepreneur.