

**Podcast Transcript** (The audio transcript has been edited slightly for readability):

**Episode 5:** The concept of Intrapreneurship and its importance across businesses globally!

**Speaker: Sandhya Sarah Jose**

Good Morning everyone and welcome to another edition of Sattva Speaks. I am Ananya and I will be the host for today's episode. For our first-time viewers, this podcast series is dedicated to understanding the social ecosystem and the trends in the social sector. In the previous episode, we focussed on some of the project case studies that Sattva has handled till date and tried to connect our learnings from them. In this episode, we will focus more on the latest trends and concepts emerging in the sector. We will understand in detail one such concept named 'Intrapreneurship'.

For today's episode, we have with us Sandhya, who is currently involved in the programme team of IDEX Accelerator- Global Fellows Program. IDEX stands for Intrapreneur Development Experience. Since 2010, IDEX has served as an impact career launch-pad and human capital investor for over 300 fellows from over 33 countries. Its mission is to create the next wave of "social intrapreneurs" who will support, lead and advance the work of socially focused enterprises around the world. As a practising Intrapreneur, Strategist and Program Manager with close to 9 years of experience, she is primarily responsible for all tasks related to communications, marketing, managing admission cycles and administrative processes. Prior to IDEX, Sandhya was involved with IDE Consulting.

**AS:** Sandhya, let us start by discussing the concept and the key aspects of 'Intrapreneurship'.

**SSJ:** I always have a bit of a giggle when I talk about it because people assume it to be a mispronunciation or a typo when they are reading it. So, I have a lot of fun explaining it. Essentially, the term intrapreneurship has been around for a couple of decades, but I think it was popularised by Steve Jobs in his 1985 article. Very simply put, intrapreneurs are essentially people who innovate from within existing organisations. So, the concept itself is referring to practising entrepreneurship within a larger organisation. Today it is more important than ever and many companies across sector are catching up to this idea. Much like an entrepreneur, an intrapreneur is identified as being able to take conversations of leadership and being able to manage innovation and passion with critical business acumen. The most important trait that I believe intrapreneurs possess is an ability to pivot at the right time and adaptively respond to a changed market situation. Other advantages I see - being able to limit that absolute risk by utilising the support and funding from the existing organisation and having the access to mentorship within the company. Just to give you a great example of intrapreneurship, my favourite example is the one from the Sony PlayStation. So, it only came about because a junior employee, Ken, was messing around with his daughter's Nintendo and he spent hours trying to make the console more powerful and user friendly. But he took it to his bosses, and they rejected it straight off because they thought the gaming industry was a waste. Much later, only one senior employee saw merit in Ken's innovation and well, the rest is history. It is a household staple at the moment.

**AS:** How can organisations help motivate this culture across its employee base and encourage social intrapreneurship in them?

**SSJ:** So, I imagine that a key goal for any organisation today is to continue to improve and remain relevant in the sector they operate. Today, it is also very commonplace to hear tales of employed talented young professionals whose job roles and opportunities are mismatched with their professional and personal ambitions. So, lest companies continue to lose out on their most valuable resources, it only makes sense for business leaders across sectors to take the pulse of their evolving workforce and nurture a culture of real innovation and ownership within. The skills of an intrapreneur are vital for any organisation's effectiveness and growth and their internal efforts can also lead to path breaking success, combating social issues like in sectors of health, education, gender, livelihood, impact investing and the like. So essentially, I feel like businesses need to develop, recognise, and celebrate these intrapreneurs and their abilities. This requires shifting away from typical conservative organisational structures to structures where the incentive mechanism and the communication systems, resource allocation, sort of help them tap into these energies of the intrapreneur. And, ultimately, unleash their power to innovate to bring about real change. So, some companies have done this really successfully, by allowing employees to set aside a portion of their working hours towards innovation and new project development. For example, Google has a 20 percent time policy where they allow each employee to dedicate 20 percent of their working hours to passion projects that benefit the company. Similarly, 3M allows 15 percent of their time to create new projects and seeking breakthrough innovations. Today, our work at IDEX is testament to the fact that businesses have recognised the new talent economy of social intrapreneurs and their abilities and this wave of intrapreneurship is definitely picking up as a trend more and more in organisations with a social focus which are more convinced about attracting new employees who fit into innovative intrapreneur profiles. So, it is moving just beyond what is on paper.

**AS:** Sandhya, how do you identify yourself as an intrapreneur? Or what are the qualities of an intrapreneur?

**SSJ:** So, at IDEX we have been running the programme for the last 10 years. We have had several cohorts come in. We have been privileged to watch them exhibit in practice what it means to be a successful intrapreneur. And by virtue of that, IDEX has now compiled these 9 guiding light principles to be a successful intrapreneur. Number 1 is adopting an engagement mindset. So, this is what requires real commitment to the discovery process and active pursuit of the possibility by asking probing questions and really mining your environment for raw materials of brilliance. This helps you build on that curiosity and open mindedness which is so essential for an intrapreneur. Number 2 is striving to produce your best body of work and by work, I mean literally any way you can contribute to the world using your available resources. So, your body of work comprises the sum total of where you chose to focus your assets, your time, energy. It kind of brings in qualities of resourcefulness and accountability. Number 3 is not to estimate the power of invisible impact. So often your best body of work won't offer

you an audience. But the greater takeaway here is that there is an opportunity to perform and the way show up is one of the biggest ways you can inject meaning into your work. Number 4 would be making time for the community. Impactful work happens most consistently in the community regardless of the type of work you do. Continuously and proactively building check in points to collaborate, share, inspire, and grow with others. This is truly a passion in play. Number 5 is drawing your own mind. So, your professional trajectory, career growth, network, relationships, body of work all of these is really important. So, strategically setting priorities to ensure you are spending your time and energy is very important and then making small, consistent, daily steps in the direction you desire to move ahead is the key. This is sort of building courage. Courage to have the bigger picture, tied you through a very rocky terrain of success. Number 6 is choosing 'Must' more than 'Should'. Should is how we are wanted to show up in the world and must is who we are, what we believe, and what we do when we are alone, with are truest, most authentic self. Must is what happens when we confess to other people's ideals and start connecting to our own. This helps you develop that resilience and determination. Number 7 is making less time for excuses and more time for reflection. The first of that is a no brainer. When the urge to complain rears its ugly head, just ask yourself how can I try and make this better. If you are, in fact stuck, there is no shame in asking for help. Number 8 would be to consider everyone a teacher. So, you learn more about yourself and life if you don't limit where you learn from and who teaches you those lessons. The teachers can be anyone who knows something that you don't. This is something regardless of resources, age, influence, skills, years of experience, charisma and more. This helps exercise humility which is so important for being an intrapreneur. And lastly, sharing everything and learning more freely from whoever will listen. This is really important to be able to carry on that fervour for intrapreneurship.

**AS:** Lastly Sandhya, we are excited to know how you have, be it at IDEX or otherwise, applied the concept and motivated the culture in your organisation? We would love to hear some interesting specific anecdotes.

**SSJ:** So, if I look at my career trajectory so far, there has always been one commonality in all of these experiences. Essentially, I found myself always flung into the deep end and needing to keep afloat and figure things out with little to no supervision. This is an environment I always thrived in, I learnt to thrive in. I think without really planning it, I grew attracted to the high intensity, all commitment kind of experiences. If that were not the case, I would then create scenarios that would, then, demand it because I was very aware of the fact that I was getting a very unique experience. So, essentially, I have always been an intrapreneur and I just did not know it. After I discovered IDEX 4 years ago that sort of title was something I identify with.

Just to give you context, at IDEX no two days are the same. Each of us don many different hats based on the work that needs to get done. There is a large element on needing to get work done and moving seamlessly in between various functions. I have had multiple opportunities to action intrapreneurial pursuits. Perhaps the most recent example I can give you is with regards to the fellowship programme itself. Today there are multiple programmes

offering similar capacity building, mentorship, and people seeking to enter the social impact space. Over a couple of conversations, I realised that while we may have just about perfected the delivery of our existing fellowship programme, if we needed to stay competitively relevant to our audience, we needed to also be easily accessible. Just after a couple of brainstorming sessions with my executive director, I plunged right in and developed 4 new brand offerings to the IDEX experience which is basically a full immersion experience, an onsite blended experience, a wholly virtual experience, and another additional iteration that we look to develop with based on a lot of fillers with working with working professionals in India who may not necessarily have the opportunity to leave their hometown, relocate to Bangalore for the duration of the fellowship. So, we worked on developing a programme here specifically to support this demographic with the launch of the working professionals fellowship programme. All of this is almost poetic that it lined up perfectly with IDEX having completed 10 years in operations. We have launched this for the current July 2020 cohort for which we are currently accepting applications. IDEX is also moved into several different verticals. Perhaps too early to talk about it at the moment, but if we get an opportunity, we will love to dive into that once we start to flesh those out. But, in every point and at any moment, it is a full commitment to really ensuring that you are putting your best foot forward, you are really thinking outside the box, and you are not confining yourself to a particular role or designation. I think that has been essential to our success.

Thanks a bunch Sandhya for those amazing insights.

This brings us to the end of this episode. We will definitely come back soon with other interesting aspects of the talent landscape in the development sector and hence, we request you to watch out for this space for more information.

Do visit our website [www.sattva.co.in](http://www.sattva.co.in) and [www.careersinimpact.com](http://www.careersinimpact.com) to get a better understanding of the social landscape, project engagements, and the opportunities in the sector.

Thanks a lot, and take care.

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Sattva has been working with various nonprofits and social organisations as well as corporate clients to help them define their social impact goals. Our focus is to solve critical problems and find scalable solutions. We assist organisations in formulating their long-term social impact strategy by strategically aligning with business to provide meaningful solutions to social issues.

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