Chapter 7
Intrapreneurship in Business Innovation: The Importance of Intellectual Capital Protection – Capitalize on the Commitment of Its Human Capital

Irene Martín
Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, Spain

Mercedes Ramos
Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, Spain

Luis Alberto Rivas Herrero
Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, Spain

ABSTRACT
Corporate entrepreneurship or intrapreneurship is increasingly seen as a way of generating competitive advantages in companies and institutions. The current climate calls for organisations to innovate their management strategies to bring them in line with these new requirements. One such alternative is to capitalise on the commitment, capacity, ingenuity and creativity of their human talent. Companies need to be more streamlined. They need entrepreneurial employees, capable of working internally as if they were a start-up. That intellectual capital (IC) generated by the corporate entrepreneurs is the most valuable resource and most important dynamic capability that knowledge-intensive institutions (learning organizations) have in order to achieve future competitive positioning. The legal protection of IC is deemed essential to protect the base of the core competences. This article describes and justifies the need to foster and develop corporate entrepreneurship and the internal conditions required to do so.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-2936-1.ch007
INTRODUCTION

The achievement of social wellbeing is greatly determined by the economic development of the nations. This fundamentally depends on the activities of their companies and organisations. The high competitiveness prevailing in the business-economic macro and micro context paints a highly pressured painter in terms of both from international and local competitors. Innovation in organisational and business structures emerges, in this framework, as fundamental in the competitive race that would allow the companies and organisations to exist. Innovating in management strategies and ensuring they are in line with these new requirements is a priority goal. Therefore, one of the main strategies to be pursued has consequently tended to capitalize on the commitment, ability, ingenuity and creativity of their human talent. The aim is thus to design a new organisational philosophy based on the human capital. Companies need to attract talent with an entrepreneurial spirit. In this regard, there are many authors, particularly since the 1980s and 1990s, that consider entrepreneurship and, in particular, intrapreneurship as a means to generate sustainable competitive advantages in companies and organisations. There are many large corporations, such as General Electric or Coca Cola, which have had to change the profile of their executives for that of “explorers”. Management of innovation projects in large companies and corporations adopts the ways of working and processes of the start-ups. Their innovation projects are set up and operate as small intrapreneurial companies, as start-ups, meaning that they are fast, streamlined and capable of operating with few resources.

Three objectives are pursued in this chapter:

- To understand why intellectual capital (IC) – and in particular human capital – is the main asset in corporate entrepreneurship from the strategic dimension.
- To highlight the internal conditions that necessarily must be assumed within business strategies for intrapreneurial teams to be structured and operate as start-ups within a large corporation.
- To understand and clarify the need for legal protection of the intellectual capacity of the company and the innovations implemented by intrapreneurs.

The commitment in large corporations to corporate entrepreneurship as a strategic pathway to manage innovation protection (particularly disruptive management) requires three aspects relating to its internal policies and culture to be previously worked and developed.

- The need to develop an internal culture focused on human capital. Capable of rewarding the talent of the intrapreneurial employees and of protecting intangible capital and the results generated in the form of innovation.
- The need to assume ways of working and new methodologies that guarantee the running of those innovation micro-companies established in large corporations.
- The need to formalise policies and standards that protect intrapreneurs and the innovation results generated in corporate intrapreneurship projects.

The chapter is structured as follows:

Section 1 introduces corporate entrepreneurship or intrapreneurship as a strategic process in the management of intrapreneurial innovation projects and as a means of corporate positioning. The literature is therefore reviewed and the relevance and evolution of this strategic pathway in large corporations that
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