

**Prof David Grayson is interviewed by Magali Sennane for French on-line media [Youphil.com](http://Youphil.com), (which specialises in social innovation and CR) about social intrapreneurism**

**Q: I think you met many cases during your research, and I was wondering if globally all those ventures have met the target they hoped at the beginning ?**

No! Some fail. Others change their plans in the light of experience and reactions from others. Social intrapreneurism is tough and not for the faint-hearted!

**Q: Does it works all the time ?**

No!

**Q: If not, what are the reasons for failure ?**

Various reasons. Like many other entrepreneurial ideas, they may not be commercially viable. Sometimes, the idea is good but the social intrapreneur lacks the mix of skills and persistence and creativity to make their idea. Sometimes, it may be a commercially viable idea and the intrapreneur may be very competent - but the business may not be receptive. We have met some social intrapreneurs who were rebuffed first time around - but who later got their idea off the ground when the leadership of the business changed, or when their ideas suddenly became more attractive to their employer because of interest from big business customers.

**Q: Can we meet social intrapreneurs only in large corporations or can we also meet social intrapreneurs in small and medium size companies ?**

The Doughty Centre is starting to look at that question now! So ask me again in a few months time! Logically, I see no reason why not - but the social intrapreneur *might be* the owner-manager of the SME him or herself!

**Q: Also, do you think social intrapreneurism could become a new trend in CSR ?**

Perhaps - but I think more importantly, social intrapreneurism is a new trend in core business! It is another form of business innovation, another way of businesses engaging their employees.

**Q: How would you describe a social intrapreneur ?**

Social intrapreneurs are people usually within a large corporation who take direct initiative for innovations which address social or environmental challenges profitably. Typically, they are going against the grain and challenging their employers. Some of the social intrapreneurs that we have met talk of "moonlighting for their employers" - they have the job that they are paid for and then the second job they do at weekends, during holidays to pursue an idea that could create both business value for their employer and societal value.

**Q: Do they have some special characteristics ?**

We observed some mindsets, behaviours and skills. A mindset is defined by the principles and values that shape individual decision-making. The principles and values of the majority of social intrapreneurs we interviewed centre around societal value-creation, such as preserving the natural environment and serving others. Early experiences build awareness of the interdependence of people and their environment. Social intrapreneurs have, however, overcome the traditional dichotomy of thinking either in business or in societal terms. Our interviewees clearly exhibited principles and values oriented around social and environmental care and preservation. Social intrapreneurs demonstrated some dominant behaviours in the process of becoming aware of societal challenges and in their approach to resolving them. Three behaviours were most common: persistency and self-belief, learning, and outreach. Skills (also called talents) describe a learned capacity to perform a task with a minimum outlay of time and energy. The common skills we identified among social intrapreneurs were entrepreneurship and communications which together created the necessary trust that social intrapreneurs need to earn in order to pursue their ideas within their organisations. Marketing and communication skills appeared to help several of our subjects build a business case for their project and engage the support of others. Other specialist technical skills in fields such as IT and engineering appear to have aided preparation of an in-depth business case for action, designing or implementing a project. Social intrapreneurs also appear skilled at working in partnership with other organisations; this can be the key to establishing credibility and gaining the expertise needed for building the business case for action on social and environmental issues and to implement, or provide external validation for, social innovation programmes. These entrepreneurial and communication skills, combined with a deep knowledge of their businesses, helped them to gain the trust of their employer and, in turn, the necessary leeway to experiment with new ideas. Social intrapreneurs have an ability to find and inspire champions to raise awareness of their project and sponsors to sanction resources.