Making a difference – sustainability

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK

Hello, and welcome to the fourth and final episode on our series on intrapreneurialism. You can listen back to the first three episodes, where we looked at what an intrapreneur is, how we build an environment that supports and builds intrapreneurs and finally, how we apply intrapreneurialism to digital and AI. In this session, we're going to be focusing specifically on sustainability. Previously, sustainability might have been considered something that was nice to have, nice to do. It really took a long time to become a core part of what businesses really need to have an impact on, but increasingly now, it's not just a business strategy, it's a core part of what we all need to do to protect this planet. For me personally, working in manufacturing, it’s a very difficult challenge. Manufacturing by its nature, has an impact on this world, and we spend a huge amount of time and effort and money on working out how we can best reduce the impact that manufacturing various products around the world can have. Today I’m joined by three guests, who have very kindly spent some time with us today to explore the topics of sustainability but particularly how we can support intrapreneurs within our organisations or even grow intrapreneurs in our organisations to support efforts in sustainability. Where really what’s

needed is not just process but also people to step out of line, be a maverick and try and make a change. So today, thank you very much to the three of you for joining me. I'm joined by Dr Victoria Hands, who's Director of Sustainability at The Open University. Alex Cole, who's the CEO of Tin Ventures, and also an Entrepreneur in Residence at The Open University. And Chris Bridgman, who's the Managing Partner at Bridgman and Bridgman. So thank you, the three of you, for joining me today. Perhaps you can each take a few minutes to introduce yourselves, your businesses and your experiences. Victoria, can I start with you?

Dr Victoria Hands, Director of Sustainability, The Open University
Yes. Hi Josh, thanks for having us here today. So yes, I'm Director of Sustainability at The Open University, and that's a role that's really grown over the last couple of decades into a recognised, essential part of every university. At the OU, we look at the OU as educator, our core business of teaching, learning and research and the OU as a business – so our operational mandate – and I can bring experience from those into our conversation later.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Fantastic, thank you very much and Alex.

Alex Cole, CEO – Tin Ventures, Entrepreneur in Residence, The Open University
Hi, good to meet you all. I'm the CEO of Tin Ventures, which is an ethical venture builder, and I'm also an angel investor. But the second hat, as you mentioned, is that I'm an Entrepreneur in Residence of The Open University, which effectively means I lead on entrepreneurship across the ambition of the university to work with SMEs and with entrepreneurs to, I suppose, catalyse the entrepreneurship but also then help that to scale and to gain traction across the UK and the world.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Fantastic. Thank you for joining us today, Alex. And finally, Chris.

Chris Bridgman, Managing Partner, Bridgman & Bridgman LLP
Thanks, Josh. So I am the Managing Partner of Bridgman and Bridgman LLP. We are specialists in the design, installation, maintenance and training of green living roofs. We operate across the UK. I'm also Vice Chair of the Green Roof Organisation, which is the UK trade body for green roofing, and also represent that association at the European Federation. So flying the flag for the UK for living rooftops around the world.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Amazing and Chris, I've read that your journey to get to this business is one of entrepreneurialism. It was a bit of a pivot, wasn't it?

Chris Bridgman, Managing Partner, Bridgman & Bridgman LLP
Absolutely. So we set the business up, it's myself and my father, and we set the business up around 19 years ago. Back in 2009 the business was set up to service commercial landscape industries. So we've worked on some quite interesting, large-scale projects, like the London 2012 Olympic Park and Athletes Village, quite a lot of stuff at Heathrow Terminal 5 and some other big infrastructure projects. But back in 2009 we were actually asked to put a green roof on one of the buildings that we were landscaping, and to be absolutely honest, that was the first time I'd really heard about green roofing, and I thought well, that sounds interesting. And as a business early on.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
That's a key earmark of an entrepreneur, to never have heard of it, say yes anyway and work it out next.

Chris Bridgman, Managing Partner, Bridgman & Bridgman LLP
I was going to say, Josh, yes absolutely. At that stage in business, just say yes to everything. And we did, and actually I think it was the best yes I've ever said. It was that turning point, I thought, this is going to be big in the UK. At the time it was very small, it was very unheard of, but that market has grown incredibly, and our business now solely focuses on that and everything associated with it.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
And that's not just sustainability for the planet, that's also I guess, social responsibility for people as well. I mean, being around the environment is as much about people as it is about the planet.

Chris Bridgman, Managing Partner, Bridgman & Bridgman LLP
Absolutely. I mean, green roofs are multi-beneficial, they're great for people, they're great for biodiversity. The benefits include a flash-flood reduction, carbon capture, air cooling, they insulate buildings. So they're not 100% of the solution to any one problem, but they're 50% of the solution to lots of different problems, and that makes them a really good tool in in the fight against climate change.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Absolutely. Alex, your business invests in businesses that are sustainable and socially responsible, is that right?

Alex Cole, CEO – Tin Ventures, Entrepreneur in Residence, The Open University
Yes, so we're slightly different in terms of, an investor effectively has a pipeline or a deal flow of businesses that they look at and in effect they don't have anything to do with them. They just effectively decide, do they want to invest, is it the right sector for them? So they have a thesis effectively that they align to. My business is slightly different. We're a venture builder. So an ethical venture builder. So we build businesses.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
You're hands on.

Alex Cole, CEO – Tin Ventures, Entrepreneur in Residence, The Open University
Hands on, or we take on a business at an early stage and we add to their capability by joining. We can help them create their board. We effectively join their company and then help them to grow from there.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Are you also seeing in those businesses sustainability and social impact becoming one and the same set of goals?

Alex Cole, CEO – Tin Ventures, Entrepreneur in Residence, The Open University
Yes. One of the reasons I chose the model, rather than just being an investor, is I embed that at source. It's not something I see as arbitrary, I see it as essential. So the ESG as we know it now is becoming a regulatory activity. So the governments and organisations are going to be essentially insisting that businesses are aligned to their environmental, social and governance, all wrap around sustainability. But I think that actually just makes a business more resilient, and it's exactly how they should be built. So we embed that from the get-go, from the beginning of the conversation. We're only working with businesses that have that social impact at its heart. They care about the environment, they're doing something in every layer of their business from the centre in terms of just the way they operate, the materials they use. We want

them to be circular in their thinking, in terms of their design of their products. All of those activities, I think, just make them more resilient and actually more attractive to an investor.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
And when starting from day one with that principle in mind, it makes it much easier to grow a business that not just prevents doing bad for the world but does positive good as well.

Alex Cole, CEO – Tin Ventures, Entrepreneur in Residence, The Open University
100%, because you're growing your supply chain, and those conversations at every procurement conversation, every supplier conversation, if you're very open and confident about it – I was going to say challenging, but let's say confident about it – you'll find it a much easier conversation to have. And exactly as you said, you're not unwinding anything, you're not retrofitting later, which becomes quite difficult.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
It's ingrained in who you are. Whereas Victoria, The Open University is a very large business, and a business that's been around for a long time not to say that you haven't always tried to do good, but as sustainability becomes a bigger agenda item, how are you making that shift as a large organisation where it might not have always been a large part of of the agenda?

Dr Victoria Hands, Director of Sustainability, The Open University
The Open University was founded as a disruptive innovation on a social justice mission, to make education available to anyone. We still are open access. So taking the social justice mission and expanding that to an environmental and social justice mission was, for me, the sort of obvious next step.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Easy transition. Yeah.

Dr Victoria Hands, Director of Sustainability, The Open University
I think that, you know, there's a lot of understanding of the intersectionality of social justice and environmental justice. We can't have one without the other, so they grow together. And then what Alex was saying about embedding that from the beginning, when you've got a good understanding of social justice, I think it makes that expansion a lot easier. And on the other hand, if you focused on environmental or biodiversity, very nature-based solutions, obviously, as you said at the beginning, that has social positive impacts. So the two are really interlinked. So at The Open University, it was an obvious transition to make, and it's one that we're still growing into.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Absolutely and I've heard the phrase the two-loops model related to to your department of The Open University. Can you tell us a bit about what that is and what that means?

Dr Victoria Hands, Director of Sustainability, The Open University
It's a framework which is really helpful for us to embed sustainability, and it recognises the need for us to be lifelong learners. So if we imagine that the current dominant system is like a wave which is cresting - this is one of the loops – and if we look back 100 years there's many technologies, ideas, and they were really new when they started out and they've emerged, and now they've become part of the dominant culture. And the dominant culture, we have to recognise, is leading us on a trajectory which doesn't look good in terms of planetary boundaries. So climate and nature being two of the most important, which sustain ourselves and the economy. So this wave is cresting, and that's one of the loops. And our job, if we can keep learning and keep looking and innovating and looking out for those big opportunities or small opportunities, it will be able to surf the crest of the dominant wave onto the new wave, which is emerging. And that new wave often comes from entrepreneurial ideas, intrapreneurs. So groups of people who start coalescing and build what is going to become the new paradigm. But at the moment, I would say the stage we're in is those networks are coalescing, so the wave hasn't quite grown. So the old system is the one loop, and the new emergent system is the second loop, and it's how we navigate between those two loops.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
So would you consider yourself to be an intrapreneur then?

Dr Victoria Hands, Director of Sustainability, The Open University
I think if you work in sustainability you have to be an intrapreneur because, let's face it, we have to be innovative. There are many systems which exist already which were based on a growth trajectory post-World War Two. The focus was on bringing, the economy back to stability, so we did some things like designing in obsolescence, which weren't intended to be around for the long term. And so having to look back and make adjustments is one way of dealing with that. But starting afresh now with a regenerative approach, that circular-economy approach that Alex mentioned, is another way, a much more effective way. So we're not having to clear up, but there are some things we might have to stop doing.

But there's so much opportunity to be found in what we could start doing that is regenerative and has win-win-win benefits.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
So are there some things that The Open University does that you feel really gives you the scope to be an intrapreneur and others like you across the business?

Dr Victoria Hands, Director of Sustainability, The Open University
As a large organisation, our students would be our product, if you like. If we were a factory, which we're not, you know, we'd be looking at our products. And if you think about the impact that our graduates have in the world that is huge opportunity to innovate in terms of the curriculum. We try to ensure that

sustainability, and skills for sustainability are embedded in all our courses. So you might think, well that's just for STEM people, or that's just for environmentalists That's a key focus, but actually problem-based learning, solving problems, thinking on your feet, taking a big picture, creativity and creative problem solving, these transferable skills are embedded throughout our curriculum, and they're all the sorts of skills we need, both for sustainability but for a resilient and thriving economy.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Okay. And you might think that in a business like some of Alex's, they may have said, we start from the beginning as being a sustainable business. We perhaps don't have the need for intrapreneurs in the same way because it is the baseline of what we do. But I have to ask Alex, do you find that some of your businesses start out as sustainable as they can be, and as they grow, they find impacts that maybe weren't forecast or weren't predicted?

Alex Cole, CEO – Tin Ventures, Entrepreneur in Residence, The Open University
It's a great question. I think staying on mission with it, especially with a business that starts out with purpose, being purpose led and socially led, and then you get investment, and then suddenly you get traction and you've got money and basically everything you were probably dreaming about many years ago when you were sitting in your living room just thinking about the business. I mean, that's just hard as a human being to manage. What then? The point about embedding it in the structure, almost the culture of the

business, means that intrapreneurship is the activity. I think, as Victoria just alluded to, you then have your soldiers, if you like, or your disciples and trying not to stray into territory. So those people who are actually delivering and doing the work, if you like, of your business, if the culture is right – and we try to make sure it is – it's not all on the leadership team, it's not all on the founder to do that. It's just the way we do business. It's just how we do it. So that social mission becomes just the pulse of the business, looking constantly at your carbon footprint, the way you operate your business. You are leading, and that becomes your differentiator to your competition. Just the way you operate is so transformational. I like the way the two loops, that Victoria just mentioned, because that is the clash. The clash is against the way it's always been done and the way a lot of our businesses are trying to do, so they're disruptive by nature. So I think intrapreneurship is the mechanism to do it. It gives you the toolkit to do that.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
And it's inspiring, right? We all want to work with nice people that do good things. It doesn't matter what you say, your goals are. Nice people that do good things tend to be the people we like working with. So if that's who you are as a culture and a business, you surely are in a position to do quite well for yourself.

Alex Cole, CEO – Tin Ventures, Entrepreneur in Residence, The Open University
To be honest, it's more transactional than that. It is inspiring, but that inspiration comes at the point when you're trying, you're recruiting, and this is where I would urge people to introduce. I mean, all three of us are effectively part of that story. So what Chris is doing is effectively giving people the opportunity in their workplace or in other workplaces.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Yeah, you got ahead of my next question.

Alex Cole, CEO – Tin Ventures, Entrepreneur in Residence, The Open University
Sorry. So to actively anticipate and work in green spaces in their workplace instead of having to leave the workplace to do so. You've then got the training and capacity building that Victoria brings, where there's gaps in people's knowledge. And they're in the world that I came from, which was consulting and professional services, it's a knowledge business, so you don't really have the opportunity to say I don't know. You need to know. So the training clearly is important. But then you do have this opportunity to lead those conversations to drive direction of travel, by proving that it can work. And clearly money is a good way of doing it. The social impact and hiring people, that's where it really starts to come together. We don't really have any challenges hiring people because they're just inspired to come and work with us. We get more people than we can handle, which, as I know, is anti the trend at the moment.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Absolutely. Well in that vein, coming back to you Chris, are you seeing larger businesses look to – I don't want to say purchase sustainability – but certainly look to people who can provide elements of sustainability to their environment, to their business. And maybe they can't change everything internally, but they can certainly work with partners who can. Are you seeing that as a growing trend?

Chris Bridgman, Managing Partner, Bridgman & Bridgman LLP
Absolutely. I think we've seen that really ramp up in the last few years. Some of that is coming as demand from within the business. So staff members pushing and suggesting change, and actually business owners and board level are actually saying, well, we need to do some green initiatives. It's not just let's do it and forget about it, it's we've got to do this, we've got to do it well and we want it to be here for years to come. And I think it's become a lot more personal. It's not just about a business doing it as a PR stunt. It's about, we've all got to do these sorts of initiatives for the planet and for our future and our family's futures. So it has really changed and, once upon a time, being in business quite a while, you see that when there's economic downturn or even recession that environmental projects tend to get chopped quite quickly. We don't see that as much now. It's almost as if it's embedded, and it has to stay regardless of the economic situation. So that's a big change that I've seen.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
We see the same thing. I think ten years ago people would say, well it needs to be recyclable, compostable and all the rest of it. And you go, okay, here's the price. And they go, how much is the petrochemicals again? Whereas nowadays that intent that starts in the specification lives on into the product because it's not about the money, it's about the impact and also the demand from the consumer. I think the business wants to do good, but also there's a big driver from that, which is the market itself, who's saying we want to buy sustainable, we want to live sustainable, we want to be surrounded by sustainable. I would like to think that's driving all of your businesses.

Would you say the same?

Chris Bridgman, Managing Partner, Bridgman & Bridgman LLP
I agree and I think there's a lot more accountability now. A lot of people, a lot of clients actually want to see what your supply chain looks like, what's your carbon footprint? We offer a very green service, but how is that put together? And we are still put to account on that, which I think is a really good way to ensure that people are doing as much as they can rather than just saying they are.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Absolutely and supporting those intrapreneurs, whereas previously they might have been the mavericks. Victoria as you said, the person that stands out that tries to create change in this industry has traditionally been the

person that leads sustainability, increasingly now those people are given permission to the point where they're not mavericks any more, they're a core part of the strategy. But to be somebody that has the ability to stand out and make change within a business, you need skills. So Victoria, what sort of things are The Open University doing to try and build those skills for those who are or wish to be intrapreneurs and make a difference within their organisations?

Dr Victoria Hands, Director of Sustainability, The Open University
We've got a range of short and free courses on our OpenLearn platform, and we have a sustainability hub where we collect together those courses, so that gives people a flavour for what they are. They range from business ethics, values in business, to really climate-specific, nature, nature literacy, climate literacy. So how do we bring that into everyday roles and jobs across sectors and organisations? And we've also got obviously our range of qualifications leading to undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications. And what we're seeing there, is not just a great interest in environmental management, for example, but also in other topics. So perhaps psychology is not something you would relate normally with sustainability, but actually climate anxiety and eco anxiety.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Behavioural change is a big part of it.

Dr Victoria Hands, Director of Sustainability, The Open University
Yeah and how we change, how human beings change. Those habits we fall into that we know we want to break. So the new year is often a time when we make commitments to go to the gym and eat less this, and do more exercise. And it's similar with all our habits in terms of workplace habits, doing things differently, bringing about change. And then the other thing that we do at The Open University is we have reviewed our curriculum to look across the whole 400-odd modules that we provide of where we bring in specific skills related to the Sustainable Development Goals – they're the 17 global goals to bring about sustainability, the future we want, the collective good – but we also look at the inner-development goals. And we're starting to look at where those courses bring in those transferable skills I mentioned earlier, because they're really important. If we've worked collaboratively as part of a team during our studies, we're going to have more experience of that to take into the workplace, to work collaboratively with people outside our own departments and teams.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
And why is it so important that leaders should also be studying and building on their educations behind, I guess, to enable intrapreneurs to make a difference? It's not just about the leaders being responsible for change, it's enabling their teams as well.

Dr Victoria Hands, Director of Sustainability, The Open University
Well the field of sustainability, just the legislation, and not all the legislation not all of the ideas get made into legislation, but the legislation is changing on a regular basis. So senior leaders need to understand what the impact on their organisation is to manage reputational risk, because more and more we're being asked to report alongside our annual accounts on our carbon emissions, and that's brilliant. But that requires skills. That means that it's in the public domain, all of the data. And it is a relatively new field, measuring our carbon emissions.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
That requires assistance, right? No longer is it the intrapreneur taking a step out and saying, I've done this, it does good for our sustainability, thumbs up. It needs to be measurable, it needs to be process driven nowadays. We need to be accountable for our impact.

Dr Victoria Hands, Director of Sustainability, The Open University
Absolutely and a dual-accounting system is what we want, not something that's on the side, that's in an Excel document on somebody's laptop. We really need it to be institutionalised and formalised across those structures. So I think that's one area. And then in terms of thought leadership, senior leaders can change whole industries. So one of my favourite examples is Interface, a flooring company. Their CEO had an epiphany and realised that he could do good, he could leave a legacy, he could become a good ancestor. He gave his senior leadership team a mission, and they all thought it was impossible

at first. And yet Interface Flooring, during the crash of 2008, they weren't affected. Since then they've gone on to break multiple commitments, records, if you like, in terms of commitments to reducing their environmental impact. So this is a thriving business that's growing, that really values innovation and doing things differently. And they're making a profit. So the thought leadership that industry leaders, that business Chief Exec's, can bring can really transition us faster and in the direction we need to go.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
You used the phrase good ancestors there. Can we talk about that? I haven't heard that before.

Dr Victoria Hands, Director of Sustainability, The Open University
That's one of my favourite phrases. So basically we might look back in history and think about people from the past, but how connected do we feel, and how does that influence us looking forward to the future? And one key competency that we can all develop is futures thinking. If you think about it, you know, in our daily practice, perhaps I'm delivering my annual objectives, I might have a two or three-year career plan or a project that I'm working on, I might have a 25-year mortgage, but how far into the future do I look? Thinking about being a good ancestor enables you to step into the future and look back to where you are currently and think about the legacy you want to leave for future generations. One example that we might all see when we go walking in the UK countryside is many of our stately homes have been designed by Capability Brown. But when those planting schemes were

first put in place the saplings must have been really small, and he must have had such vision to think about these vast avenues of oak trees which grow slowly.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Which take 100 years to come to fruition.

Dr Victoria Hands, Director of Sustainability, The Open University
And yet here we are now benefiting from these vistas which couldn't have been imagined then, or might have been. Thinking about how you can become a good ancestor right now, with all the skills and competencies you have now, is a really empowering way to generate creativity and innovation.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Absolutely and something you mentioned there was about quantifying impact. Chris, are you finding increasingly your customers want to see a quantifiable number put to your work or the work they might be enquiring about?

Chris Bridgman, Managing Partner, Bridgman & Bridgman LLP
Yes, they absolutely do, and data is key to this. And this is actually a big part of a new project we're working on with The Open University, funded by Open Societal Challenges. Basically, green roofs have been around for thousands of years. The first ever depicted green roofs were on the Hanging Gardens of

Babylon, so they're not a new thing. But the UK is quite a way behind the rest of the world because there's no subsidies for green roofing here.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Whereas you look at Singapore, and that's incredible. Most of the roofs are green.

Chris Bridgman, Managing Partner, Bridgman & Bridgman LLP
Absolutely, and not so far away in Germany and the Netherlands, there's funds available. The government subsidise this sort of thing for homeowners and businesses. Data is available, but no data is available from the UK, so we rely on lots of European data and data from America and Canada. But actually it's really important for us and our industry to have those, how many kilograms of carbon per square metre does a green roof capture? What is the UV value? What's the, how much is it insulating the building and by what value? And we can't provide that data here in the UK, so this is really quite groundbreaking for our industry that we're now working with a world-renowned university to produce data for the UK. And actually, after the two-year period of monitoring, a live lab that we're building on the campus at Walton Hall, we're going to be able to produce data and use that to help lobby government to actually roll this out even further than it already is.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
So the funding really is critical to have an impact, we need the resources. And you said that The Open University have a fund to invest in that kind of thing. Is that right, Victoria?

Dr Victoria Hands, Director of Sustainability, The Open University
Yes, we have Open Societal Challenges, and we welcome challenges from the business community, and we match up relevant academics with those businesses and their challenges to create together a joint project where we can innovate, create new data. As Chris said, and then look at the evidence base to move the specific project forward. If we just think about green roofs or other infrastructure, but green roofs, we need policies and for that we need policy-makers, decision-makers, to understand what policies support green roofs and perhaps what planning policies do not support them. So it's critical that we work together and collaborate, and that's what the Open Societal Challenges project offers to businesses. So please get in touch with us at The Open University. We welcome your challenges, and we want to work together to create an evidence base for sustainable activities.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
That's fantastic. It needs more organisations to be able to invest in these projects to have the impact. Alex, when you're investing in businesses, partnering with businesses, it's clear that the leadership team, their stakeholders are yourself and the board around them, but what about the intrapreneurs within the business that are stepping out to make further

change? Who are their stakeholders, for somebody that might not be at a board level within the business?

Alex Cole, CEO – Tin Ventures, Entrepreneur in Residence, The Open University

That's a good question. I participated on a panel recently, which was about, it was driven by a book called Obsolete by Chris Baker, and the premise of it was how change brands are changing the world. And the intrapreneurs that we generate, effectively we're inspiring them to go out and change the world by what they do in their homes, so the products they buy, sometimes driven by inspiring their children. Once you start telling children, as you know, they'll start nagging. If you tell them something, they'll start nagging you and then holding you to account. You're hoisted by your own petard effectively. And my children and grandchildren do that. So you say, well, we're buying this particular product, and clearly that causes some tension when it's not the normal brand, but actually, when you tell them why, they then start to say, well actually, why aren't you doing that with your car dad? Or why aren't you doing that with your… And they're into it now. You're into everything. You're going to be held accountable.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK

Don't go to a board meeting, just go home.

Alex Cole, CEO – Tin Ventures, Entrepreneur in Residence, The Open University

100%. So they're stakeholders. We're inspiring people to think those stakeholders are the city they live in, the shopkeeper. These are the conversations. Yes, 100%. So these are just, you know, everybody has a part to play, and we are seeing – and I think this has been said already – we are seeing that the because this is now in the public consciousness, these conversations are starting to drive innovation. I'm working with the Open Societal Challenges to inspire SMEs who are, in the words of The Open University language of entrepreneurship, are curious about entrepreneurship. They've got an idea, they just don't know how, where to start. The Open University's Open Business Challenge is effectively asking those people to come towards the universe. They'll meet someone like me. I can then help them through systems thinking and design thinking to write out their challenge as a problem statement, which effectively then starts to become something you could invest in. You could start to help them grow as a prototype using design thinking. They can then talk to customers using an MVP of some kind and then just validate. Would they pay for that? How much would they pay for that? How would they need to adapt it? And again, as we said, it's very easy when you start saying to them, add your purpose, your why, and also your social mission to that conversation. And then they come back to you and say, oh, it got much easier when I told people why I was doing it, and the fact that actually I'm helping the planet, they said they would pay more. And I said, right. And so, I think the stakeholder conversation becomes broader and wider. And you're now into the mayor of a city, of a

region and all these kinds of conversations. And I think entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship unlocks that.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Absolutely and I think I've always said in my businesses, if you like a behaviour you see or something that's happening that you see, the best thing you can do is showcase it. And it feels like that's really how you're doing things. You're finding people that you like, the way they do things, you like the way they contribute and you're showcasing them. Is that a fair observation?

Alex Cole, CEO – Tin Ventures, Entrepreneur in Residence, The Open University
Yes. It's come from and it's inspired by my corporate career. I was in large corporations, the BBC, Capgemini, most recently, which was a few years ago. But Capgemini was definitely the place where I became quite a vocal intrapreneur. I had the leadership capability, so I was plugged into the board, and of the chairman of of the country that I was sitting in at that time. And so I found once you started, we created an incubate function, which is basically ideas coming in to the business. So we just wanted to harvest the ideas from our people, but then we give them a kind of mini Dragon's Den opportunity to then pitch it. And I would then fund that for them with small amounts of money. Then they had our customer base to go and try it on, and clearly that offered an opportunity to us to showcase that we had innovation everywhere and our people were very innovative. But what I then started doing is actually shining a light on those people. And they were

everywhere. You started seeing people who were working in the kitchen that had found a really cool, innovative way of creating a circular waste opportunity, because they started taking some of the waste, giving it to shops down the road. Unbeknownst to us, they were giving it to schools. And then we just actually said, well, let's make that work, let's do it in a systematic way and help it to grow. So I think you do have to. I would urge every company to go and find these hidden heroes, if you like, these people who are doing this work for no recognition at all but just finding systems and ways of doing things, especially where it is helping supporting the sustainability of the business.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
And that is what an intrapreneur is really, I think. Something we've spoken about a lot in each of these episodes is what was the environment that people felt that they could be an intrapreneur in and felt supported in that sort of role as not – I don't want to say not doing what you're told, but feeling like you're stepping out of what you're expected to do to go and do something new. Are there some key things that you feel, when you were in Capgemini or anywhere, that that's a cornerstone of why I felt able to be an intrapreneur and stand out?

Alex Cole, CEO – Tin Ventures, Entrepreneur in Residence, The Open University
Yes, so I think you've touched on one of the really important points and Victoria I think alludes to that and probably the same with Chris, these are people who stand out. There are people who are prepared to take on the

organisation, and it's not for everybody. So the leadership there, I try to role-model that to try and, I suppose, embarrass some of the other leaders who had people working for them that they're not recognising. But actually, you are trying to give them the confidence. And I think that's it, the confidence to say, okay we're welcoming this. This is not a challenging conversation, this is a welcome conversation. You do need that thick skin. You do need to have that kind of, I don't know, professional confidence.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Resilience.

Alex Cole, CEO – Tin Ventures, Entrepreneur in Residence, The Open University
Well the professional confidence and competence because you still have to do your day job. So if your performance is not doing so great, it's probably not the time to to raise your hand and say, look at what I just did, when actually you're not doing so well with your day job.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
So get your day to day right and then build on it.

Alex Cole, CEO – Tin Ventures, Entrepreneur in Residence, The Open University
But if you can integrate the two things, and people are going to get that the direction of travel is basically around what they do anyway, and this is an

added value, that's when you really start to. Intrapreneurship basically comes into its own at that stage, as you said.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Absolutely. So Chris, what does the future look like for your business?

Chris Bridgman, Managing Partner, Bridgman & Bridgman LLP
I think there's real...

Alex Cole, CEO – Tin Ventures, Entrepreneur in Residence, The Open University
Loads of cash!

Chris Bridgman, Managing Partner, Bridgman & Bridgman LLP
Yes, hopefully. Well, I want to go and talk to Alex straight after this. I think since we started green roofing back in 2009, and back in that time a green roof was generally something you saw on Grand Designs or someone sort of did it on an eco project as a bit of an out-there thing to do, but now it's absolutely commonplace, and I see a lot of planning portals and construction journals that on a daily basis promote new projects that have been given planning permission. And every time I scroll through that now, most of those projects, most of those inner-city developments, the tower blocks, the high rises, they've all got green roofs on them. Now, rewind even three years, I would get really excited if I just saw one with a green roof on, but now I'm seeing all of them with green roofs on, and for me that feels we've come a long, long way. But, actually, the interesting part for me and the bit that excites me is actually

retrofitting. So we've got a huge amount of rooftops across the UK that are strong enough to be retrofitted with green space basically. In a climate, the climate emergency where we're looking for more green space in our towns and cities, this is a straightforward way, quite a quick win, to go forward at pace to do that. So take a measurement we did in Milton Keynes, there's the equivalent of six full-size football pitches' worth of roof space that could be greened overnight without structural enhancement. Now that's a huge amount of green space that we could quickly. It would cost, but it could be fairly quickly rolled out. And the same for London, 30% of London is roof space that could take a green roof. So you know, when we're saying we're all struggling to achieve the goals and it's not as easy to bring in nature-based solutions, actually, I think it is. I think we've just got to be, we've got to take that jump and that leap and actually introduce that as the way forward. So, I think, yeah.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
You've got to find the intrapreneurs within the government organisations, the councils, the large property developers, the people who want to stand out and go, actually no, we're going to invest in green roofs, because this all needs funding, right? It's huge impact and somebody needs to pay for it.

Chris Bridgman, Managing Partner, Bridgman & Bridgman LLP
Absolutely.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Have you got any tips of how you find those people that are willing to to stand up? I assume not all your work comes to you, you have to go and find some of it.

Chris Bridgman, Managing Partner, Bridgman & Bridgman LLP
We do, yes. What we did in Milton Keynes, actually, this is quite interesting. We work all over the UK, but we did very little in Milton Keynes, and I thought, well in the city that strives to be the greenest city in the world we don't really have many green rooftops. And why am I, why are my team travelling all around? Why are we travelling across the country to do this green solution when actually we should be doing it in our own town? So what we did was actually built a living lab on a YMCA building in central Milton Keynes. And it was a place where we invited councillors, architects, residents, business owners to come up and see what a green roof is. And actually through that scheme, that's where we met Professor Nicholas Braithwaite and Jodi Houghton of Go Green from The Open University. It was a conversation on that roof that actually got us started on the journey to bring this project forward that we're just about to start now, two years on, with The Open University. So I think it's all about creating something that people can visit. Often I talk about green roofs and people nod and sort of get it.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
You say a story, and it needs to be visual and tangible.

Chris Bridgman, Managing Partner, Bridgman & Bridgman LLP
Sure, if you put them on a roof that is green and you're telling that story at the same time, they're like, well, why isn't every roof green? Or look at that roof, that roof could be green. And that's exactly what it was. That has created a huge drive locally and a big uptake in more retrofitting. So that's being a Milton Keynes resident, being born here, grew up here, still live here and will never want to move away. That's sort of the thing that I've wanted to really bring to our home town.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Absolutely and so there must be quite a lot of research going on at The Open University in various sustainability projects. What other things are the university doing to support programmes like Chris's to make a change in the UK?

Dr Victoria Hands, Director of Sustainability, The Open University
We've got a wide range of research projects, and often they are pushing the boundaries of what's known. One of our other really successful and important projects is the Floodplain Meadows project. There are so few floodplains left in the UK, and the ones that are left are rich sources of biodiversity, so by studying these and recording, a bit like the living lab on the green roof. By recording that, we have an evidence base for what good looks like and how we can really support those targets that we've been set by government on net zero.

Every local authority is required to meet them. So we've got a range of research projects that focus on environmental and nature-based solutions, but we've also got other projects which are looking at the law and policy-making, businesses and how to support SMEs, for instance, because we've all got a role to play. And then we've got a range of other projects looking at education, looking at policing. So it's a wide range. They might not all identify as sustainability projects, but I think what we can see is, whilst we can all deliver those projects, the ability to integrate the thinking on those, they all affect the other. So if Chris achieves the ambition of covering 30% of London in green roofs, well, the people who go up onto the roofs will benefit, sure, but actually what will happen is London will be able to respond to climate change more effectively. It might even cool down and if we collate the data, which shows that that's probably the case, that will affect everybody in the capital. And similarly, if with these extreme rain, heavy rainfalls that we're getting, that most of the damage happens in a few minutes of torrential downpour, and what a green roof might be able to do is to attenuate, to slow down that huge downpour. So that affects all homeowners, and then people in the streets, etc. So I think part of our social science research is understanding how all of these seemingly separate things integrate and can create that positive spiral upwards as opposed to a negative downward one.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Absolutely and Alex, you're quite involved with The Open University as an Entrepreneur in Residence. Is there anything alongside all of these

programmes that Victoria's listed that you could recommend to the university to help support smaller businesses like some of the early start-ups you might be involved with?

Alex Cole, CEO – Tin Ventures, Entrepreneur in Residence, The Open University

Another timely question. So I have been working with The Open University recently around productivity. There has been a big focus on productivity, a number of reports. The university issued one recently. But the government are focusing on, UK government is focusing on productivity because effectively the UK, like Europe, but particularly the UK, has fallen off a cliff in terms of its productivity. And what that means is our GVA, or our gross value added, is declining, which means we have less money in the economy, people are spending less money, we're making less money, our products are not as innovative as the rest of the world. So to improve that productivity we're saying that we need to encourage more people, more people like Chris, to export and to start looking at other markets, not just your UK market, because that market potentially is limited or saturated. But you certainly should be building your products and services. Technology has a part to play with that, and we call that servitisation, which is effectively you, everything is as a service, so that can be cloud-based and using technology. So anything, if you could take any bit of your product or service and make it accessible digitally, you don't need to even leave the country. But there are, like your business Josh, manufacturing opportunities in other countries where they are welcoming you, they're actually giving you physical spaces and

giving you opportunities to integrate your product and service into that country, and we should be doing that because clearly that expands revenue, expands your innovation, your potential for innovation. It does come with challenges. And based on the subject we're talking about, I talk a little bit. People don't like this phrase, I kind of still love it, which is the triple bottom line, which is I'm looking at my profit, but I am looking at my social and my environmental impact at the same time. It does mean that if you enter a new culture or a new country that mix or that model, that operating model you're using may have to move, it may have to tweak. But then again, that creates opportunity. Clearly equates to different stories, and again, that gives you more opportunity to tell the story of the impact you're having in the world and create more people who get it, if you like.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Absolutely. Well, and innovation is one of the UK's critical exports. The piece we do best is value add services and innovation. Change and sustainability has got to be a critical part of that, and we can't just keep everything to ourselves to fix London. This has got to be about a global impact if we've got the capability.

Alex Cole, CEO – Tin Ventures, Entrepreneur in Residence, The Open University
100%. The programme is called the Business Export Exchange Programme – a little plug there.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Go ahead.

Alex Cole, CEO – Tin Ventures, Entrepreneur in Residence, The Open University
Please see it shortly. So BEEP – because I like a lovely acronym – the BEEP programme effectively is starting to inspire that change. But understanding and recognising that SMEs are not like corporates, they don't have all the resources in the world, they don't have this ambition built in because they're struggling just to do the day job, as I said, they've got limited. So you do need to invest in them. So we've packaged this programme around an MBA. I've asked The Open University to be innovative about the way it delivers an MBA. It's used to doing it in a corporate setting to people who come every month or every few weeks. We're talking about SMEs – and you'll know this, Josh – that will consume the whole curriculum in a weekend if they have to and then be ready to go on Monday. And so that's been a challenge for them to think about that. So how do we give it to them, give them the information and then support them with networks and role models and insight that give them a sense of what they're doing in a professional, in a world-class way but quickly and at the pace so they can download it as quickly as they need and move as fast as they need, because they can then open up opportunities for themselves in other territories?

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
That's really exciting. I have to take a look at that myself actually.

Alex Cole, CEO – Tin Ventures, Entrepreneur in Residence, The Open University
Thanks. Brilliant.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Well look, we're coming to the end of this session now. I always try and sum these sessions up. They they go far and wide, so to do that in a few words is always tricky, but I think the key thing I'm pulling out of this is that intrapreneurialism is critical to sustainability. It's effectively the fundamental part of it. It's always been those that are willing to step out of line that are able to have the impact, and I think it continues to be, even though sustainability and the impact our businesses have become core, more and more core to our strategy, it still needs those that are willing to step out to create change because they find new ways of doing things and new ways to have impact. I think increasingly, data is becoming more important. Being able to capture the impact we're having, not just feel like we're doing good but actually be able to quantify that into how much good have we done, how much return have we got for the investment? Return on investment is not just about making money, it's also about making sure we're delivering value with the money we're investing in our sustainability ventures. But critically, this is still an area that needs more funding – as many funds and investors who are focusing on sustainability and impact, it still needs more funding. And so if you're working in a business or running a business, it still needs to be a consideration when budgeting, it still needs to be somewhere that we're looking to find the funding, because there's only so much impact we can

have without the resources to deliver. I'd like to end this session by asking each of you the same question. I'd like to ask you all if somebody watching this considers themselves an intrapreneur, or would really like to make a step forward and become an intrapreneur, and their real passion is sustainability and impact, what's a tip or two that you'd give them to say, look, this is what you could be doing tomorrow, next week? Go and get out of bed and do something. This is what I'd recommend you do next to go and follow through on that. Perhaps Alex, we can start with you?

Alex Cole, CEO – Tin Ventures, Entrepreneur in Residence, The Open University

It's an interesting question actually, because I'm trying to drill it down to two things. So the first tip, I would say, if you're in a corporate setting, I would say build a business case integrated with the strategy, the business strategy. So if the business is trying to gain more customers in – I'm making it up – in aerospace in whatever industry sector, try and build an intrapreneurship business case where you can add value to that user, leveraging sustainability. So you could be saying, I've spoken to a few colleagues, and we'd love to come up with a proposition for our customers that we co-design with them that will make you more money but actually will advance our capability and our interest and our purpose around sustainability. But this is linked to your existing strategy, your existing direction of travel. That's the first thing. I think the second thing is to build a coalition of the willing. Find some people and already speak to them, and if you have to go and speak to their line managers, because that's where it will probably all fall over if they say

no, they won't release them. So do a little bit of background work. I always call it create a plug. A socket, for the plug to plug into first, and then you're giving them the plug at the same time.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
The toolkit, you need the network.

Alex Cole, CEO – Tin Ventures, Entrepreneur in Residence, The Open University
Don't just go into them with a problem and then expect them to solve it. Because I remember when I was in that situation, I didn't have the time to do that. But if you gave it to me as, here's a socket that we built, and here's the plug I think we could make. Oh, I say, okay great, get on with it.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Absolutely and Victoria, if somebody wanted to become an intrapreneur, have a sustainable impact, and they wanted something to do next week, where would you tell them to start?

Dr Victoria Hands, Director of Sustainability, The Open University
I think two places. First of all I'd be looking at the risk. So unless we act there's huge risk to any organisation. It's not a doom-and-gloom story, but it's really showing that we need to act now, and there is risk that we can mitigate and avoid if we act now. So I get them to really look at, pull together a risk register, looking to the future and the potential impacts on business as usual if we don't innovate. And then the second thing for inspiration is I'd look

to nature, biomimicry. You know, if you want to double check how to do something, check what would nature do. And within that, I would also, long-term thinking, I would also say look to future generations, or intergenerational equity, and see how you can become a good ancestor.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Fantastic, thank you very much. Finally Chris, if somebody wanted to get out of bed and make a difference like you are, what would you say they should start with?

Chris Bridgman, Managing Partner, Bridgman & Bridgman LLP
Firstly, building on Alex's point, actually create something quite quickly for people to touch and feel, to look at, to understand what you're doing. Just going there, telling people an idea, it takes a lot of drilling into them to buy into that. So to create something quite quickly, I would say is important. And to go back to a point Victoria made earlier about Capability Brown planting very small trees, if I take that back to what we did in green roofing, where we we took quite a few bus stops and put green roofs on them, which had real mixed reactions, and at one point it was a political bunfight, and on social media people were, you can't even cut the grass, why are you putting green roofs on bus stops, it's a silly idea. For me, that created so much conversation and raised so much awareness about what a green roof was, because lots of green roofs – and across the country they're so high up you will never see them unless you're above them – and it was such a great talking point and a learning point, but it was done on a small scale. And I think if you can

do things like that similar to the saplings that become huge trees now and become the UK's.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Make your evidence, make your mark, make a point and then expand from there.

Chris Bridgman, Managing Partner, Bridgman & Bridgman LLP
Yes but start small, and don't be afraid to start small, because actually that can create a big drive in itself.

Josh Valman, Host, Innovation advisor and CEO of RPDK
Real change. That is a very good point to end on. This is been the fourth in a series of four episodes on intrapreneurialism. If you'd like to go and watch some more, you can find those on The Open University website and find out about what an intrapreneur is, the environment that you can both nurture yourself as an intrapreneur or intrapreneurs within your organisation, and then two special sections on implementing digital and AI and this one here on sustainability. So, thank you to everybody on this episode. Thank you to everybody that's joined the series. And thank you for listening.