

# **Cross Border Leadership Patterns: A Pattern Language for Social Intrapreneurs at the Early Stages**

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## **Abstract**

Social intrapreneurs are individuals who take initiatives to solve social problems with utilizing resources within a company they belong to and building networks among professionals not just in their own organization but also outside of it and their business stakeholders. This pattern language is created based on results of interviews with 15 social intrapreneurs in Japan who have experienced all of the early stage business development process of cross border leadership, which we defined. The aim of building this pattern language on social intrapreneurship is to encourage individuals, who are willing to initiate a project, to tackle social issue while they belong to a corporate organization, to take action and create social impact by using all the available resources in a company.

## **1. Introduction**

In the century, the majority of corporations, including Japanese companies, that are at the stage of start-up and growth encourage their employees to establish solid business models that are able to sustainably generate profits. However, after they came to the stage of steady, which they successfully found the financially stable models and systems, many of companies, especially large corporations in Japan, are eventually facing challenges, such as slowed-down productivity and profitability due to standardization and bureaucratization within an organization and culture of not taking risks to preserve existing models. In order to lead them to the breakthrough, they are required to shift their mindset to create new value by utilizing resources they have already owned and collaborate with professionals even in the different sectors.

Along the paradigm shift in the process of creating new business, how each employee performs is changing. While each individual was expected to complete their own tasks and roles that their boss assigned when a company was at the phase of steady, they are now required to initiate new projects that are linked to both of the mission of a company and their own passion.

A new approach to innovation may be exactly what is needed amongst Japanese corporations. What may help corporate leaders, who tend to depend on scientific numbers and research, change their mindset is to seek out the common good and not just improving their business (Nonaka & Takeuchi 2011).

We found a group of Japanese professionals who are called *social intrapreneurs*. They work inside major corporations or organizations to develop and promote practical solutions to social or environmental challenges where progress is currently stalled by market failures. They are also someone who applies the principles of social entrepreneurship inside a major organization, and characterized by an 'insider-outsider' mindset and approach (SustainAbility 2008).

Interestingly, we found the passionate individuals who create new project which gives tremendous impacts on social problems by using a variety of existing resources in the

companies that they belong to in Japan. Also, we realize that there are a number of individuals who struggle with starting such a project. That motivated us to create a pattern language for those social intrapreneurs still at the beginning stages.

## 2. Method

We conducted an individual interview with 15 social intrapreneurs in Japan for 120 minutes each. Each participant had developed a new business within each of their respective corporations. The interview questions were based on an essence model created by Wilson Learning Worldwide, a company focused to improve human performance (Wilson Learning, 1990). The questions focused on 5 categories: 1. Events Leading Up to Begin, 2. Essence (Core, Intent), 3. Form (Process, Action), and 4. Impact (Value), and 5. Message.

In the early stages of business development process, many obstacles must be overcome to achieve any vision. Each question in the interview examined various actions taken in a business development process. *Events Leading Up to Begin* asked the participants background story. *Essence* discussed the intent and reason for their passion towards their social issue of choice, vision. *Form* questioned the process, obstacles experienced and how they resolve it, and knowledge gained. In *Impact*, participants discussed their results and its impact on society, corporation and self. And in *Message*, we asked participants their vision and concept for professionals working under what they have created, and the significance of actualizing their goal.

## 3. Results

As we reviewed our results, we found there were underlining common issues and problems between all participants, especially in the early stages of the intrepeneurs' business development process. We broke down this early stage in 5 critical steps, and organized the common behaviors as 20 different actions. The 5 steps are: Discovery, Determination, Concept Sharing, Linkage, and Result. Table 1 shows the 21 patterns in this pattern languages. These are identified as: 0: Foundation Building, 1: Moya-moya Dialogue, 2: Ambitious Circle, 3: Network Building, 4: Feasible First Step, 5: Shared Value, 6: Executive Supporter, 7: Passionate Proposal, 8: Exit Plan, 9: Negative Comment Translator, 10: Multi-Perspective Sharing, 11: Co-Creation Ecosystem, 12: Other Things to Do? 13: Story-Telling, 14: Leverage Point on Decision-Making, 15: Realizing their Vision, 16: Execution Team, 17: Small Success, 18: Establish Outside Reputation, 19: Best Alternative, 20: Opportunity Loss Proposal. Each pattern was placed in 3 separate categories as Concept Actualization, Leading (progressive actions), or Against (overcome adversities).

Further, in recognizing that each action had a context, problem, and solution, we were able to create a pattern language. We developed this pattern language as a common language to help anyone who wants to become a social intrepeneur and succeed in his/her process (Iba, 2013). After reorganizing the actions as 20 pattern languages, we asked the 15 previously interviewed participants to review their actions based on the 20 patterns we created. Results showed that they had experienced each pattern 50% to 92% of the time.

In this paper, we present five patterns, 1. Moya-moya Dialogue, 2. Ambitious Circle, 11: Co-creation Ecosystem, 14: Leverage Point on Decision-Making, and 15: Realizing their Value.

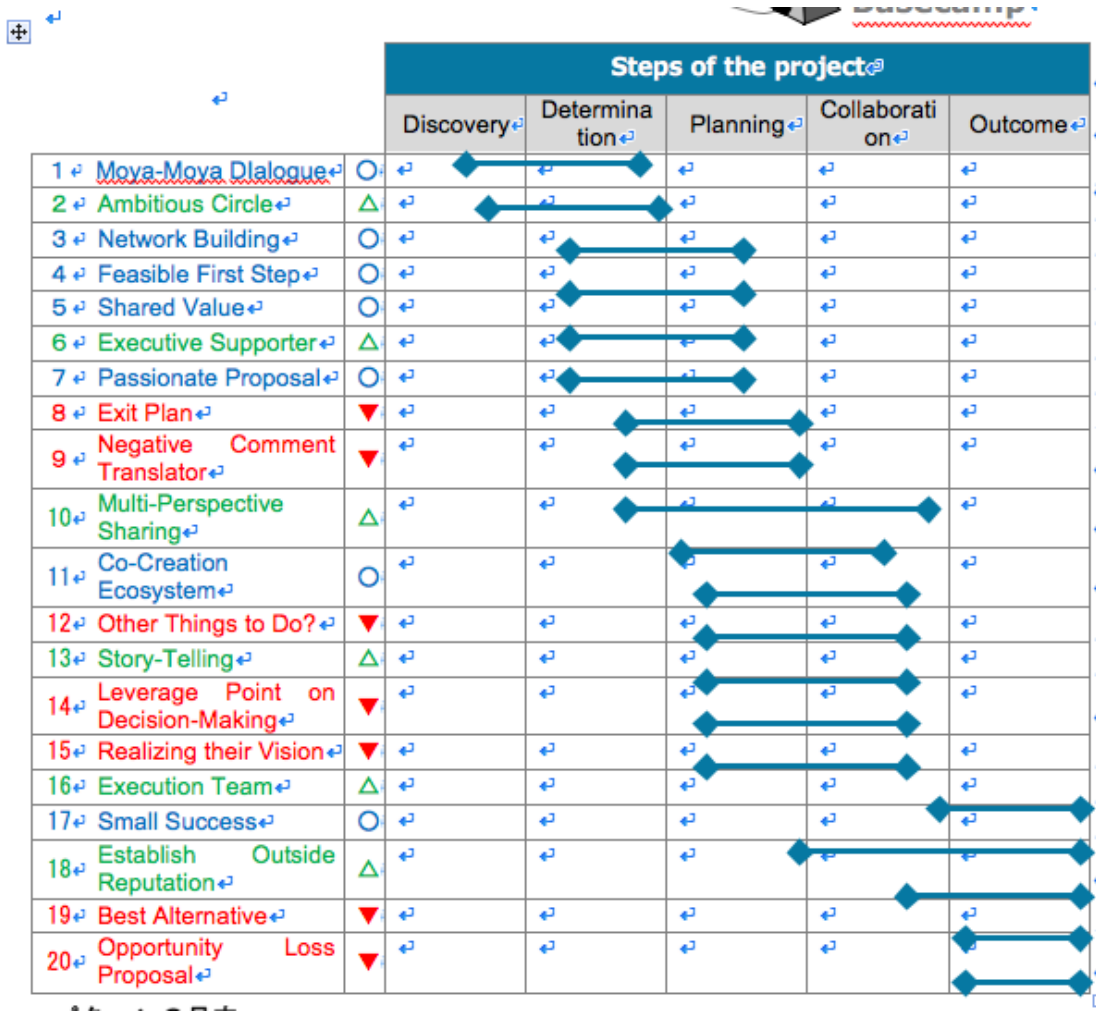


Table 1. 21 Patterns on Cross Border Leadership Patterns

## **Patterns**

### **Moya-moya Dialogue**

"Moya-moya" is a word that means feeling of uncertainty and frustrations about the fact you are not sure about something. Start telling your idea rather than feeling frustrated about the fact that your idea for the project is not clear.

#### **Context**

You have some ideas and questions that might lead you to start up a new project.

#### **Problem**

Your ideas of detailed actions are not clear yet neither feasible, so you miss chances to polish them.

At the first place stage, ideas are usually too vague to be implemented, so you do not have confidence to share it with others.

- Whenever people do not have confidence about quality of ideas, they hesitate to talk about it to others.
- If you do not share your ideas with others, you have much fewer opportunities to polish them.

#### **Solution**

Meet with a variety of people from diverse background to set up opportunities to tell your ideas.

Express your ideas as if you are just talking to your friends instead of contemplating what you say

Even if you have not come up with specific solutions yet, just tell what you think as a problem

- Be honest about you are still not sure what exactly you would do for your project.
- Set up opportunities to meet up with professionals in diverse backgrounds to make sure which part of your ideas can gain empathy and support from them.

#### **Consequence**

Talking out your ideas make your thoughts organized.

This leads you to feel more confident about your approach to the issue.

- Feedbacks can polish your ideas.
- People listening to you may tell you that your idea is not worth implementing because they are not well-formed; this may discourage you from taking next step.

## **Ambitious Circle**

Find comrades who plan and take actions

### Context

You have motivation and ideas for your cross border project.

### Problem

Since you are the only one who designs a project, your idea for the project is not sophisticated enough to be implemented.

- Ideas for a project tends to be one sided when only one person brainstorms for something new.
- Since resources that you can tap into for a project are limited, your creativity to come up with new ideas also gets limited.
- Seeing a big difference between your ideal plans and what kind of resources you actually have makes you think that you have to do things that you are not good at in order to fill the gap.
- When you do not have someone to ask for feedbacks and advices for your project, you feel lonely and that leads you have less creative ideas.

### Solution

Find your comrades who you can share your ambition with in your organization, and invite them to your project as team members.

- Share significance of your project and your passion with people who might be interested.
- Listen to their thoughts on the project and what they are interested in.
- Discuss the meaning of the project for society and impacts you would like to create for society and yourselves with those new members.

### Consequence

Your project can be more feasible since it has more diverse perspectives from your comrades.

Your goal would become your team's goal by achieving a consensus among your team members on the social impact and vision of the project.

Having multi perspectives from diverse group of people may lead you not to be able to reflect your ideas that you initially think that is important.

## Co-Creative Ecosystem

Create the eco-system with multi stakeholders that bring a wide variety of perspectives and resources to your project

### Context

You are attempting to solve complex social issues by a for-profit approach

### Problem

Since inspirations and ideas based on the existing business model barely lead you to come up with great ideas to make solid income models, the impact of your plans of your project would be small.

It is almost impossible to run the business with a service that is provided with people who cannot afford it.

Solving small parts of the issue would not make you to accomplish your goal

Even if you have passion and ideas to solve the problem, having solid business model is almost that you commit to the project voluntarily.

### Solution

Create an eco-system with multi stakeholders that take action on the same issue as yours so that you can have wide variety of resources and creativity for a solution.

- Rather than struggle with creating the perfect solution which involves only your organization, find other stakeholders that share your passion and goal towards the issue (No.10 *Multi Perspective Sharing*)
- Create a community with those stakeholders and then brainstorm the ideal cycle around the issue. In this process, some of existing technology to create a solid community, such as dialogue, future session, and system thinking, would be beneficial.
- In the process of exchanging deep thoughts and feelings on each other's current situation, keep it mind that everyone always share their approaches from micro perspectives, and then others should use those details as clues for map out the larger picture.
- With your members of the co-creative ecosystem, consider ideas for an adequate financial flow, and business model that lead the issue to be solved.

### Consequence

- Looking at the situation from birds' perspective makes you clear with what has actually triggered the issue, and what is missing in the project.
- Having a variety of organizations in diverse sectors as stakeholders promote your project to be able to establish a financially benefitable business model even if the recipients of the service cannot afford it.
- Because there are so many different stakeholders are involved, it may become difficult to share benefits and profits with them.

## **Other Things to Do?**

Acquire credibility on you to get a chance for your project

### Context

You have some ideas of the cross border project, which is out of your responsibility or role, in your mind, and seek opportunity to make it happen with your *No.7 Passionate Proposal*.

### Problem

When the results of your mandatory roles do not meet the goal, you can rarely have an opportunities to do something different from compulsory tasks from your organization.

- Whenever the quality of the result on your mandatory tasks goes down, your boss and colleagues would say to you that you have other things to do before doing something new.
- If you insist on what you want to do besides your role in the organization under the situation that you are not meeting the given goal, other people might think that you are just avoiding from the tasks.
- Managers tend to push out things that hinder your organization from accomplishing the goal on the tasks and responsibility.

### Solution

Fulfill all of your tasks and responsibilities that you are given by an organization to acquire trust from all the stakeholders within your organization

- Aim to gain better results than your goal on mandatory tasks so that you would not create any space for your bosses to point out that your project hinders you from achieving the minimum goal on the mandatory role.
- Try not to do everything by yourself. Ask your boss and colleagues for help whenever you are not sure about your tasks.
- Willingly take tasks that other people hesitate to do, such as something your colleagues complain of, or something takes time for them.
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### Consequence

You will have more possibilities to gain chances to initiate your project when you bring more that what your boss and organization require you.

Creating trust on your mandatory responsibility encourage your boss to listen to what you want to initiate besides your minimum role in the organization.

- Your boss might be convinced to let you use wide variety of resources for your project.
- This approach may cause you to be so busy that you do not have time to do other things.

## **Realize their Vision**

Connecting the mission of your project to the vision of your organization

### Context

You feel like that the domain of your project does not fit that of your organization's current business model

### Problem

Decision makers of your organization are not convinced that your project deserves investing resources of the company

Valuable projects for the society do not necessarily mean that your organization have to implement them

It is hard to understand the importance of your organization's commitment to your project when its domain is different from the organization's or the process of developing the project is not the familiar way.

Organizations consist of highly specialized and fixed structure tend not to embrace diverse ideas.

- You cannot get an agreement on your project without explaining the importance of the organization's involvement in it even though you show its value as business.

### Solution

Connect the vision of your organization to the mission of your project, and make its social impact overlap with its value as business.

- Research the history of your organization to learn the founder's initial motivation and mission when starting it. If there is a book telling the history of your company or the autobiography of the founder, read them. If there is not, find people who used to work with the founder and interview them.

Link the explanation of your project itself to more conceptual vision of your organization.

- It is easier to reach an agreement about significance of your organization's commitment to the project among with your sponsors and supporters, when you present your plans as closely related to the vision of the organization which represents their social importance and purposes of their business.

### Consequence

The significance and importance of your project would be understood not as "a means" of business but as "a purpose" of the reason why your organization have to be involved in it.

Since the vision of the organization is "the basis for decision making", you can have a constructive conversation with your comrades

It becomes more possible to obtain powerful supports from founders of organizations and businesses because they already have experiences of realizing projects started from their vision.



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## Appendix

### Patlets of the *Cross Border Leadership Patterns for Social Intrapreneurs*

Table 2 introduces all 20 patterns from the *Cross Border Leadership Patterns* as patlets. It will show the pattern name, along with a short summary of the solution section. This will give the general idea of the pattern.

Table 2. All 22 patterns from the *Cross Border Leadership Patterns* as patlets

No	Pattern Name	Solution / Summary
1	Moya-moya Dialogue	Start telling your idea rather than feeling frustrated about the fact that your idea for the project is not clear.
2	Ambitious Circle	Find your comrades who you can share your ambition with in your organization, and invite them to your project as team members.
3	Network Building	Build network with a group of diverse people who empathize with your vision and possible have different background and skills.
4	Feasible First Step	Instead of getting a consensus on the whole idea of the project, start with breaking down the plan into small pieces of feasible ideas with short time goals.
5	Shared Value	Convey what kind of outcomes and results your project would bring to your organization and how you would accomplish it.
6	Executive Supporter	Find opportunities to advertise your project to executives or people who could influence people with authorities in order to make them understand what you try to achieve
7	Passionate Proposal	Create a balanced proposal that include both logical plans and your passion towards your project
8	Exit Plan	Contain some pages for objective "Withdrawal Conditions" which shows situations to suspend the project in your proposal.
9	Negative Comment Translator	Change your understanding on negative comments and accept them as opportunities to step forward

10	Multi-Perspective Sharing	Set up opportunities where all of the stakeholders can share their thoughts and perspectives on the issue you are tackling in the project
11	Co-Creation Ecosystem	Create the eco-system with multi stakeholders that bring a wide variety of perspectives and resources to your project
12	Other Things to Do?	Fulfill all of your tasks and responsibilities that you are given by an organization to acquire trust from all the stakeholders within your organization
13	Story-telling	Create a story that motivate potential supporters to empathize with your idea by reflecting on why you initiated a project, what kind of approaches you would actually take, and the impact you aim to achieve
14	Leverage Point on Decision-Making	Be selective about who and when you present your project to collect resources and permission for the project
15	Realizing their Vision	Connect the vision of your organization to the mission of your project, and make its social impact overlap with its value as business
16	Execution Team	Put an end to a concept-making phase of your project, and carefully select suitable members for the next implementation phase.
17	Small Success	In the beginning phase of implementing the project, focus on making a number of small success that can be seen and evaluated easily
18	Establish Outside Reputation	Get supports and recognitions from the outside of your organization first
19	Best Alternative	Present that your project is the best alternatives
20	Risk for Not-Doing	Show the risk that an organization would make unless they do not do a business out of your project