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Spinoffs Aren't Just for Big Companies

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Last week SmartBrief on Leadership called attention to an article on Business-Strategy-Innovation.com which discussed how some big companies scale their innovation by seeding "independent spinoffs to develop high-risk, high-reward projects."

With their huge employee rosters and advantage in terms of working capital and infrastructure, it makes sense that large companies that believe they can see real returns from this focus are making this practice a priority. But despite often being at a disadvantage in the factors I just mentioned, **small businesses are getting in on this as well.**

One of the answers that stood out to the last question in Winning Workplaces\ 2010 Top Small Company Workplaces award application – *What are your key long-term strategic goals for the organization and the workplace?* – was this one by winner MAYA Design, a 21-year-old design consultancy and technology research lab based in Pennsylvania:

MAYA grows, and allows employees to grow and stretch, by spinning off complimentary companies. Employees can present a business plan to the owners and if they think it's viable, and does not compete with MAYA, MAYA provides the infrastructure (HR, finance, clerical and IT support) to help them get started. This has always been a part of our strategic goals. We currently have two companies (we call them doppos) incubating, one of which will probably spin off in 2010, the other of which will take a few years to be ready to start. We are constantly working with the employees to think of ideas for new doppos. MAYA Design will continue to be around 50 employees, as we believe this is an optimum number for the collaborative work we do, and is well managed.

When well executed, as is the case at MAYA, this practice produces a triple win that comes from a workplace culture foundation of employee engagement:

- **Win for [Buy Accutane](#) Employees:** Spearheading or assisting in the formation of a new venture from an existing company – talk about a resume builder!
- **Win for the Company:** This practice inherently minimizes the risk of launching a new venture, while maximizing the returns for the parent company. If the venture proves successful, employee-leaders of it and their subsequent staff are built-in evangelists for the parent company, which further helps their recruiting and sales efforts.
- **Win for the Greater Community:** Startup ventures that are successful are a sorely needed source of employment and tax revenues, which can both help our economy recover faster.

Do you know of any businesses that use a practice similar to MAYA Design's? If so I encourage you to comment about it below. I'd especially like to know how it helps with building trust in the workplace.

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