

The Innovation Literacy Opportunity

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– Dr. Alex Bruton

WHY?

“It was a ten-day period I won’t soon forget,” says Dr. Alex Bruton, founder and president of The Innographer. “At first because I was cursing myself for scheduling everything all at once, but in time and in all seriousness because my eyes were opened to a fundamental gap and incredible opportunity to boost the wellbeing of Canadians.”

He recalls how things began unfolding one Sunday evening a few years ago when he sat down to review his calendar and found that he’d accepted invitations to facilitate innovation and idea design sessions for five different groups in the next ten days. Indeed, he was fortunate to lead immersive experiences for a class of grade six and seven students; a group of undergraduate college students; the employees of a non-profit; a small startup team; and the newest business unit at a for-profit corporation.

“What struck me was something I now call the *innovation literacy opportunity*,” he says. “As the dust settled I realized that the 18-25 year-old students were no better at certain key innovation tasks than the grade six and seven students had been. And the people in each of the non-profit, corporate, and startup settings weren’t really any better than the students had been at those tasks. In fact, age and experience sometimes served as a handicap. It became clear that we have a great opportunity to influence wellbeing in Canada by building our innovation literacy.”

the innographer

WHAT?

The innovation literacy opportunity is a catalyst for the work of The Innographer, a Canadian practical open education firm with the mission of helping people (learn to) innovate.

The Innographer operates as a social business with the goal of having as much impact as possible in the world around us, by helping people build their innovation literacy.

Its vision is for Canadians to achieve, sustain, and share in a state of incredible wellbeing, and for Canada to become a sought-after international leader in fostering entrepreneurial thinking and enabling innovation. And in its work with educators, charities, nonprofits, social business, startups and corporations on a daily basis, the team is driven by the following:

- boosting the **innovation literacy and entrepreneurial capacities** of people in all walks of life, in Canada and, through them, across the planet;
- increasing the **accessibility** of rich, rigorous, meaningful, and practical experiences for learning and doing impactful work;
- building the **capacities of educators, managers, and others in positions of leadership** that allow them to help those around them who have the potential to design our future;
- answering the question of **how well** we're doing at closing the innovation literacy gap;
- raising the **engagement** of the general public in conversations about an authentic and productive notion of innovation; and
- encouraging **fun and joy** in all such experiences.

HOW?

The Innographer works to meet the innovation literacy opportunity in two main ways.

The Innographer for Education The Innographer for Education helps K-12 teachers and college and university professors by providing the tools they need to create the environments in which young people can learn to innovate. This is achieved through things like our: practical tools; engaging experiential classroom material; games for understanding; authentic approaches for assessing; just-in-time short courses for educators; and an upcoming disciplinary deep-dive initiative called The Entrepreneurship Teaching and Learning Scholars Program being planned for the Calgary/Banff, Alberta area in 2015.

Learn more and see some examples by visiting our DIY Innovation Toolkit at: theinnographer.com/toolkit. And the main page for the Innographer for Education at: theinnographer.com/for-education.

The Innographer for Impactful Work The Innographer for Impactful Work helps innovators and entrepreneurs in nonprofits, social businesses, startups, and corporations, by: providing customized and immersive workshop experiences; delivering professional development courses and open badges; licensing world-class curricula; and, occasionally, delivering invited keynotes.

Learn more and see some recent examples of this work here:

- theinnographer.com/toolkit/idea-modeling
- futurpreneur.ca/en/microsites/thebigidealabs
- speakers.ca/speakers/dr-alex-bruton

WHO?

Dr. Alex Bruton (P.Eng., MBA, Ph.D.) is the founder and president of The Innographer.

He has been an inventor (of some exciting stuff); the co-founder and VP of startups (both for profit and social businesses); co-founder of an innovation department (that failed spectacularly); a project and product manager (amazingly fun); and, quite by accident, a tenured professor of innovation and entrepreneurship (a role in which he earned national and international recognition). He earned a PhD in engineering in his mid twenties for an invention he and colleagues commercialized, and, over his career since that time, has since earned a degree in innovation and marketing and led the design of award winning learning and development experiences for boosting creativity, developing innovators, and unlocking the power of ideation.

Over the decades, his favorite work, speaking, and facilitation gigs have taken him to exciting places such as the research labs of advanced technology groups; the ice floes of Greenland; and the offices of some pretty amazing organizations, including Google.

His internationally award-winning programs and workshops have guided leaders of top teams and organizations from around the world. Through these and his extended/embedded engagements, he has helped managers, technical experts, creative geniuses, educators, students, and entrepreneurs to become leaders of their own really big value change-making initiatives and cultures.

His courses, talks and facilitated engagements are practical, visually engaging, and inspiring calls to action that arm individuals and their teams to design ideas that have deep impact, be dramatically more productive, and lead success for themselves and others. Participants leave inspired by new ways of thinking and with the tools they need to start right away.

Dr. Bruton led the team that developed the entrepreneurship program at Canada's Mount Royal University where he taught and carried out research as a tenured professor for seven years. Today he continues to work with universities around the world in his roles as Adjunct Professor and Teaching and Learning Scholar at that university. He is one of 20 invited "master educators" at the Experiential Classroom, now held in Gainesville FL every year, for example. And he has taught many hundreds of entrepreneurship teachers, professors and facilitators in similar venues including a recent experience through the Center for Entrepreneurship in Moscow, Russia.

He conducts research into topics related to innovation, ideation, idea modeling, deliberate opportunity design, and the scholarship of teaching and learning for innovation and entrepreneurship.

In 2011 he was named one of Calgary's Top 40 Under 40 by Avenue Magazine for his significant contributions to entrepreneurship and to fostering innovation in Calgary.

In 2012 he was named Entrepreneurial Educator of the Year in Canada (by Futurpreneur Canada), to "recognize the significant contributions made by the education sector to Canada's economic growth and prosperity... These leaders are raising the profile of entrepreneurship through the education system through a commitment to the promotion of entrepreneurship among students, faculty and community. The award winner is known for providing the guidance and resources necessary for future Canadian entrepreneurs to succeed." Dr. Bruton was the second recipient of this award, which in its inaugural year was awarded to Dr. Sheldon Levy, President of Ryerson University.

If you're reading this it's because he thinks you might be able to help him tackle the innovation literacy opportunity. Let's do it!