



## **Q & A with Mark Breen, Enterprise Saint John, Catalyst Innovation**

### **1. What does innovation mean to you?**

Innovation to me is when creativity is applied to a problem and new value is created because of that. I think it's important to highlight that anything can be innovation. Often when people think of innovation they think of folks in lab coats or some new technology. Those are certainly types of innovation but just a piece. Innovation could be as simple as taking a new route to work, saving yourself a few extra minutes. Innovation is deliberately breaking routines and looking for new and better ways of solving problems.

### **2. How does your organization approach innovation?**

I've been very lucky that Enterprise Saint John is extremely supportive of innovation. Being an economic development agency we are always looking for ways to add value to our region and help our community grow. The primary way we do that is by working with existing and new companies and helping them grow through accessing the right information and resources. I manage our Catalyst Innovation program where I work directly with companies teaching their staff problem solving skills and helping them create action plans to solve complex problems.

### **3. Why do you think innovation is important for Saint John and the province?**

Finding new ways to solve problems is vital for Saint John and the entire province. The world is becoming a smaller place and New Brunswick, whether we like it or not, is being forced to compete with other places all over the world. This applies even more so for New Brunswick businesses. We simply cannot afford to be complacent and stagnate, we will lose. We have some great Innovators doing some great things in our region now but we need to do more. Based on the Conference Board of Canada's Innovation Scorecard, New Brunswick ranks last in the country compared to other provinces. This is not sustainable and we need to do much better.

#### **4. What are some simple things people can do to drive change?**

First off I always advise people to take time to understand what is the real problem that they are trying to fix. People jump too quickly to try and find solutions and implement them and because of that often only solve a part of the problem or end up not solving the correct problem. Once you have a good understanding the problem you are trying to fix it's going to be much easier to solve it and have the solutions stick. Then, and this is extremely important, you need to have the courage to implement the solution and have some patience to follow through. We are in such a rush we expect immediate results and that's just not how it works when it comes to solving complex problems.

#### **5. How is technology changing your business model?**

I've been with Enterprise Saint John for 5 years and I've seen quite a bit of change in how we use technology to achieve our goals. The biggest change for me is how I communicate with clients. Face to face meetings are important and still need to happen but more and more I do a lot of my client work through social media, such as Facebook and LinkedIn. The advantage is that I am able to hold multiple conversations and better connect people. I see social media as a productivity multiplier, when used correctly.

#### **6. Where would you direct people if they wanted to learn more about innovation?**

Come talk to me! Seriously. I have resources and connections and would be more than happy to talk about this and help guide people.