

5 Questions with Cherise Letson, Huddle Today Magazine:

1. How do you encourage innovation in your organization?

Digital media is always evolving, and I help ensure we stay at the forefront by leveraging social media channels and features to tell stories in new, interesting ways.

2. What are some of the biggest barriers to innovation?

Bureaucracy and politics. A lot of institutions, whether it be governments or businesses, are really bogged down by process and dated hierarchy. There's often no reason for it other than fear, or the fact that it's just "the way things have always been done." For an organization to be able to innovate and do cool things, they need to be risk takers and experiment. Unfortunately, there's often little room to do that under those kinds of conditions.

New Brunswick is also over saturated by politics. It seeps into everything we do. When something bad happens the first thing a lot of people ask is "What is the government going to do about it?" There's obvious reasons for this, we're a small region and most of us can run into our MLA or MP at the local Tim Hortons.

I'm not saying that government is not important or that it doesn't play a role in innovation, it absolutely does. But when people make everything about politics that prevents us from objectively looking at the topic or issue at hand. It's a song and dance that's really getting old and it's not a good look.

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

It's pretty simple, we need to innovate if we're going to survive. Aging population, population decline, unemployment, illiteracy, child poverty, dying traditional industries, the list of issues goes on. But if we're going to make any meaningful progress we need to stop beating a dead horse and really start changing the way we think and do things.

4. What are some simple things you've done to drive change?

At *Huddle*, we simply try to tell the stories of the entrepreneurs and community leaders trying to innovate and drive change in their communities and our province. We're not just a news site, though we cover general business news too, but we try to be a gathering place for people who want to learn more about the people who are actually *doing* cool things in New Brunswick and are making an impact. These stories don't get told often enough and I think the way we tell them is different than what's been done here before.

5. What success have you had with innovation in your organization?

Huddle has carved out a niche for itself in the province's very limited media landscape. We're filling a gap with stories and content that's not being tackled by anyone else. It's been over two years since we've launched, and it's clear from our numbers and the feedback from our readers that people desperately want more of the things we do. I think that in itself, is a huge success.