3rd Edition
Portrait #1

OXYgenii:

The Faces behind Innovation

BUILD AN INNOVATIVE PROJECT:
PORTRAIT OF AN ACCIDENTAL ENTREPRENEUR

Edito

This OXYgenii edition is dedicated to One of the Faces behind Innovation.

There's no better way to present a career path of such contribution than to let the person concerned speak for himself.

Emmanuelle SALIMAN

Today's blog takes the format of a Portrait. That of an innovation player who describes himself as an accidental entrepreneur.

Eric PROUZET

. Mastère en Chimie Générale
. Diplôme d'Ingénieur de l'Ecole de Céramiques Industrielles de Limoges
. Doctorat en Chimie des Matériaux
. Directeur de Recherche et Responsable d'Equipe au CNRS (20 ans)
. Professeur Associé en Chimie et Nanotechnologie
à l'Université de Waterloo en Ontario (Canada)

To introduce Eric PROUZET we have to mention his 20 years at the CNRS and his move to Canada in 2006 as Associate Professor of Chemistry and Nanotechnology at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada.

It's also worth mentioning a specific Canadian feature: this university doesn't claim any intellectual property rights, leaving researchers free to ask on its commercialization service if they so wish. This has had a stimulating effect, reawakening its taste for innovation. A new field of possibilities.

It's also about discovering (or remembering) that Waterloo Region, the birthplace of the famous BlackBerry™ phone, has become a strong/genuine ecosystem for innovation by attracting, aiding and facilitating the establishment of multiple startups in numerous fields.

It didn't take much for Eric PROUZET to multiply his energy tenfold and embark on projects aimed at bringing research to the ground of real-world applications.

Eric, what do you remember about your experiences ?

From my first experience, I remember the importance of "**defining a convincing development strategy".**

> *My work in the field of innovation first led me to set up a company in the field of biotechnology, more specifically in the design and production of a photobioreactor for the bioconversion of CO2 into algal biomass. This enabled high-concentration, continuous production, independent of weather fluctuations and geographical location, and with extremely low energy consumption.*

Secondly, it is necessary to **propose a solution when the players are ready to accept it.**

> *The browser developed and tested with over a hundred thousand documents, consisted in identifying the most important terms in these documents and how they were arranged together. By exploring the entire document, whatever its length, we avoided the use of key words, biased search criteria...*

Thirdly, that transformation into an economically viable project **requires collaboration with a partner already well established in the market concerned, with an innovation that clearly meets a need identified by the field.**

> *My third project, currently underway, involves developing nanomaterials to improve the strength and surface properties of all types of surfaces, particularly in the automotive and aviation sectors (airplanes, helicopters) . This project, which has already led to the development of commercial products, was conducted in close collaboration with a Canadian company working in the sector.*

How did you go from action to transmission ?

This experience led me to be invited to participate as a mentor and then as an instructor in the French-speaking part of the Canadian i2I program, now run by Simon Frasier University in British Columbia.

This program ***i2I (invention to Innovation)***, created ten years ago by Professor Elicia Maine, has now become a benchmark in innovation training for young Canadian researchers.

Created over 10 years ago and having trained more than 500 researchers, this online program is now cross-Canada (30 universities). The young researchers work in a wide range of fields, whether as thesis students or postdocs.

It has been supported for several years by the Canadian agency MITACS, helping to finance student enrolment, and has just received a very large grant from a Canadian public agency.

Its strength:
A teaching and support team made up entirely of people who work or have worked in the field of innovation, either as entrepreneurs or investors.

And you've decided to open an online course soon

“ Based on my own experiences and disappointments, and on meetings with industrialists and financiers, I've managed to put together a set of principles and tools that are essential to all those who are generally overlooked in innovation policies: the real beginners.

Those who are asked: "Do you have a patent? A business plan? What is your added value? Where will you be in one year, two years, five years? What is your budget?..."

“ To all of them, my online training program will help you answer the three really important questions:
1- Does my project really make sense? Can it become an innovation? And why?
2- How can I turn the project in my head into an R&D structure called a "start-up"?
3- What do I need to do to turn this start-up into a company of interest to investors?

In parallel, I have also been working on two working and communication tools: public presentations and the use of mind maps as a creative and analytical tool. These are two important building blocks in my approach to innovation, which will also be the subject of dedicated training courses.”

A Part of Dream

From this exchange with Eric PROUZET, I can say that the question of ownership of intellectual property is central.

Canada has chosen to give its researchers wings.

Inspiring!

Emmanuelle SALIMAN – es@oxygenii.blog
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